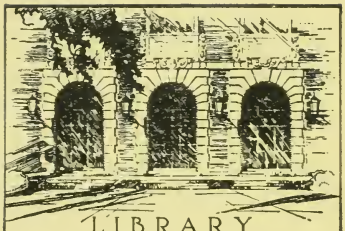
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MR. WYNYARD'S WARD.

BY

HOLME LEE,

AUTHOR OF "SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "ANNIS WARLEIGH'S FORTUNES," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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MR. WYNYARD'S WARD.

PART I.

MR. WYNYARD'S WARD.

I.

MISTLETOE AND HOLLY-BERRIES.

Whenever the Wynyards indulged in a sentimental retrospect during the period of their adversity, they always dated the beginning of the end from that merry Christmas which they spent at Brackenfield just before their Aunt Millicent was married. Life at Eastwold was narrow and monotonous; but they were young then, and the advancing shadow had not yet grown palpable enough to eclipse their natural sunshine. "Let all the children come," wrote dear old grandmamma Hutton; and they all went—Francis, Anna, Geoffrey, Maurice, Lois, and Penelope Croft, their father's ward.

They often thought afterwards how selfish they had been, how craving of a little pleasure. The question of expense, debated with grave animation upstairs and down, and other questions, less prosaic but not more serious, touched them scarcely at all. Some experience and a vast deal of imagination had exalted grandpapa's house into a place of paradisaical delights, in contrast with which home appeared a dreary, desolate waste where dulness brooded in season and out of season. "Let us go, *do* let us go!" was their cry, morning, noon, and night, and they heard nothing pathetic in nurse's ironical rejoinder: "Ay, go, *go;* leave us. Leave father and mother to keep Christmas alone. Go your ways, an' be happy. You're like young bears—you've got all your troubles before you."

On the day of their departure, Eastwold was awake and up early, and the noise of children's feet and voices, to and fro the house in ecstasy, never ceased until they were warmly packed into the old yellow chariot, and ready for a start. Papa and mamma waited on the steps to see them off, and as the lank posters trotted down the avenue, the sun

shone upon a bunch of rosy faces pressed to the window, wagging and shouting joyous good-byes until they were out of sight. No sense of uneasiness smote any of them, even at that last moment, except Penelope, who had chosen to ensconce herself all alone in the rumble. She was a queer little sensitive creature, pathetically ugly, and older by a year or two than any of her guardian's family. Her short nose reddened, and a few tears winked furtively in her large brown eyes, but before they had gone a mile on the road, the impression of pain she had caught from those figures standing on the threshold forsaken, yielded to the consolation of leafless branches, clear traced against the pale blue sky, and to the tenderness of frostwork on reed and fern under the glittering hedges. It recurred now and then throughout the journey, like the sad refrain of an old ballad, but the story-part between the echoes was romantic and fanciful, and that mysterious undertone haunted her to no ill-purpose.

Over hill and dale, over moor and windy scaur for two and twenty miles rattled the happy children, laughing, chattering, quarrelling like a nest of pies;

and when the sun began to sink behind the sombre Brackenwood, they caught a glimpse of grandpapa's chimneys amongst the cedars. Ten minutes after, they were all being kissed and cuddled and danced up and down in the great hall, with no flaw in their welcome, save a low-spoken regret from grandmamma that they had not brought her "Mary" with them, and "poor papa."

They talked about that visit to Brackenfield for long and long after—it was a bit of such genuine good cheer. A sketch that Francis made from the garden, went with them in all their subsequent wanderings. It was the merest scratch, but they knew it. Some of the windows were indicated only by a single stroke, others were omitted altogether, none made any effectual pretence at seeming what they really were—heavily mullioned, and with little leaded hexagonal panes, emblazoned in the topmost compartments with the armorial bearings of all the family connexions for a score of generations back. It was an ancient house, but there were not the gaps in the walls that occurred in Francis's handiwork; neither

were the trees that overgrew it, such flourishes of exotic foliage, but massive firs and cedars, and dark ranks of yews, old almost as the hills for which one sinuous line in the background had to stand. An out-of-the-world place it was, and, in time of snow, cut off inexorably from neighbours; but, filled with those who were kind as well as kin, it was as cheerful a house as heart could desire to spend a Christmas season in.

First, there was Squire Hutton himself—gouty, good-humoured, and generous; then there was the dame, comely and mirthful at sixty as at sixteen; there was the eldest son John, with his wife Theodora, and their leash of riotous boys; there was Ellen and Grace, with their rival girl-babies and respective husbands, Captain Blake and Sir Andrew Goodwin; there was old Uncle Christopher who had seen the world, and lived now at free-quarters, a pensioner in the house where he was born; there was Tom Martineau, a sort of cousin, who had travelled east and travelled west from youth to grey hairs, and always stayed his weary feet at Brackenfield between his wandering journeys; and lastly there was Millicent,

the youngest daughter, very fair in her unwedded summer beauty, with a love-story to point a moral for the behoof of any fantastical maiden tempted to throw happiness away in a fit of caprice or pride, as she had done.

At eighteen, Millicent had been a lovely, spoilt girl, but rich in the charm that wins love. And many loved her—most of all Michael Forester, the younger son of Sir Gilbert Forester, her father's best friend and nearest neighbour, and after a breezy wooing they became engaged. Michael was frank, free and easy; it was a triumph for him to have won her, but having won her, he rested and was thankful. Perhaps he trusted her too well, who was by nature exacting; for his cheerful assurance she construed, first, into indifference, and then into neglect. Pride sealed her lips, but every change it made her heart ice to think of she assumed as come. When the time drew near for the fulfilment of her promise, she broke it. Michael was mortified beyond expression, and all the world of their acquaintance declared that Millicent Hutton had behaved extremely ill. Her punishment was not light. Stings of love, shame,

pride, regret, each in turn pierced her to the quick. Michael acquiesced in her decision, and went his way; north, south—what was it to her? Yet wherever he went, he carried her heart with him, and that perhaps everybody knew but himself.

The lapse of time had brought many changes in and about Brackenfield since then. Mary, the eldest daughter, married eight years before to Mr. Wynyard of Eastwold, had entered on a course of suffering such as was but very imperfectly understood in her father's house. John had married, not ambitiously, but much to his liking; and the only other son had laid down his life in India. Helen and Grace had gone to homes of their own, and Millicent alone was left of all their children with the Squire and the dame. At the Grange old Sir Gilbert Forester had died, and another Sir Gilbert reigned in his stead, but Michael never came back. Tom Martineau met him once in a remote village of Algeria, where they joined in a lion hunt with a vagrant Scotch laird, and afterwards parted and went their several ways, but other tidings Millicent had none.

As her fitful pride wore down, her character

ripened to a rich maturity. To have taken her from Brackenfield now, would have been to take away its sunshine, and the Squire looked with discouragement on any amorous swain who was tempted to cast a hope towards her. Uncle Christopher quizzed her as a paradox of constancy, and said often that she was saving up for Michael Forester yet; but, ah, well-a-day, just three years after she had sent him from her, his letters home ceased. From that time till now—an interval of seven years—rumour had brought no news of him. Sir Gilbert Forester had entered into possession of his brother's lands, and had put up in the chancel of Brackenfield Church, a marble shield inscribed to his memory. He was counted amongst the dead, but all else was mystery; and her friends spoke low before Millicent, when they speculated on how he had probably perished in some far-away torrid wild—unwept, unpitied, by strangers tended and buried.

It was not so in reality, and as his return home took place during the memorable visit of the Eastwold children to grandpapa's house, and made a permanently happy and hopeful impression on Mr.

Wynyard's ward, the joyous story shall be set forth as a prelude to her own longer and more varied chronicle.

When the children and grandchildren were at Brackenfield for Christmas, the great hall was the favourite gathering-place of the family, and the fittest place, with its portraits in every panel, and its fires of Yule-logs blazing at either end. On Christmas Eve, in the afternoon, they were all there,—Francis, Geoffrey and Maurice, Philip, Jimmy and Jack, Anna and Lois, tiny Poppie and toddling Nell—six boys under fifteen, and four girls under twelve. Oh, Babel! oh, glorious confusion! and their elders all enjoying it. In the midst of the floor was a heap of green boughs, amongst which the merry little folks were culling the richest in scarlet berries, and handing them up to Robin, the gardener, who was decking the walls. The work went on until twilight, when it was nearly done, and there arose a question about hanging up the mistletoe; but behold, when the young ones looked out for the mistletoe, there was none to be found. No mistletoe? Christmas

Eve, and no mistletoe! By all means, let Robin go and cut some before the dark falls!

Robin protested that he had put more than enough into the cart, and unless the kitchen wenches had stolen it, there it must be still; so the big boys rushed away through intricate passages to the back-door, Aunt Millicent and Penelope Croft following with Lois, a little grace of a girl who was in immense excitement about the absent mistletoe. There they found the cart waiting, with a smoky lantern dangling at the shaft, and a stiff-set lad, at the horse's head, thrashing himself with long, flail-like arms to keep up his vital heat. There was a windy gloom on that north quarter of the house, and the girls stayed within the porch while gardener's Jack threw out to the boys the last green branches of yew and holly.

"Here it is, here's mistletoe!" cried Francis, and dashed off with all the other youngsters pursuing. But Millicent and Penelope stood transfixed at the apparition of a frozen white face which peered up at them from the darkness beyond the cart—such a face as Pennie had never seen either in the body or out of the body in her short life before.

It seemed to gaze at them with unseeing, stony eyes, and then to turn and turn away, and recede into the purple gloom, but with never a sound of footstep or rustle of raiment, and so was lost in the blackness of the thick-clipt yews by the wall. Millicent's hand closed on Pennie's with a clutch that almost made her cry out for pain, and drawing her breath with a sob she whispered: "It was Michael Forester's face!" Pennie did not exactly believe in ghosts, but she was mortally afraid of them, and her heart beat loud and thick as they hurried through the dark passages back to the ruddy fire-shine of the hall. Their rushing entrance was greeted by a general outcry.

"What's amiss? You look as if you had seen a ghost," said Captain Blake, Helen's sailor-spouse. "If you have a yarn to tell us, now's the witching time o' night. Come, Quixote, let us hear it."

"We have no yarn," said Pennie, answering with teeth a-chatter to one of the many names her grotesque little phiz had earned her. "But it is a night bitter enough to bleach the red out of even your face, sir."

"That's right, Pennie, give it him. He grows more like beet-root every day," cried the Squire, and made room for her in the midst of the circle. Robin the gardener observed that there would be a fall of snow before morning. Everybody echoed his prediction, and said it was lucky it had held off over Christmas Eve, or else Brackenfield must have lacked many guests, now doubtless set off upon their dark and windy way to join in the revels with which Squire Hutton always kept that festival.

At half-past five rang the dressing-bell, and away trooped young and old to make themselves gay for the dance that was to follow the dinner. Penelope was one of Millicent's most enthusiastic admirers, and her adoration pleased even while it amused the woman of sorrowful experiences. They had agreed to occupy one room, and this arrangement was now felt to be very consolatory. Millicent looked little in the mood for Christmas fun, and Pennie, to cheer her, vented a few orthodox reflections on the tricks of fancy.

"Ever since Michael Forester ceased to write home, I have believed him dead," was Millicent's reply. "I have felt, too, that if he came to me,

I should not fear him." *Not fear him!* Yet she clung close to Pennie as they went downstairs to the guests who were already assembling.

Throughout the dinner the dismal shadow haunted Pennie's mind. Mirth, laughter, turkey, plum pudding, were all thrown away upon her. Uncle Christopher rallied her in vain. Was she in love? Was she in debt, or any other difficulty? She had not a single retort left in her quiver, and Millicent was in the same silent case. It was easier in the hall afterwards. *There*, there were so many, the children were so tumultuous, that a seceder or two from the universal din was not missed. When the first country-dance was set with thirty couples, they were left out, and ensconced themselves in one of the deep window secesses. It was an old custom at Brackenfield, when any merrymaking was going on, to leave the curtains undrawn, that the village-folk might look in at the dancing. They had availed themselves of the chilly privilege on this occasion, and when the two girls entered the recess, several rustic visages drew back, and retreated to another window, where there were no sitters-out to intercept their view.

For ever so long Millicent and Pennie watched the brisk evolutions of the maze; admiring how the Squire went down the figure, as actively as if he were twenty, with sweet little granddaughter Lois, and how his dear dame threaded the needle with frisky Phil, her eldest son's eldest hope. This was the children's dance—rare fun, too; and when it was done, they all kissed their partners under the mistletoe, and were then hustled off to supper of custard and cake, and so to bed; while the ancients, having gallantly accomplished an annual duty, were permitted to retire to whist, and the multitude, who were children grown-up, kept the night alive with reels, cotillons, and more formal quadrilles.

What a pretty, happy picture it was! The panelled walls blazing with light; the solemn ancestry looking down from their garlanded frames, dignified, demure, and prim—as if there were no country-dances in their day, no Hunt the Slipper, or Ladies' Toilet, or Kiss-in-the-ring, or cakes and ale at Christmas-time, when they were lads and lasses. Ah, the old generation shows wonderfully

wise when it lives only in effigy! Those airy figures that flitted in gossamer to and fro in the shining hall are sober enough now, and their agile partners are considerably heavier on the wing. But they were merry under the mistletoe that Christmas night, and if they have given way to another generation, turn-about is but fair play—us to-day, you to-morrow, all of us very soon yesterday!

Millicent and Penelope bore their part in the dance again and again; but just before supper they found themselves once more in the window recess. They talked a little, and then looked out into the night, to see if it had kept its promise of snow, when again that spectral visage met them, eyes to eyes. For an instant only—they saw it, and it was gone! They both started away to the hearth, which Pennie left no more until she went in to supper. Her escort was Tom Martineau, who said, inquisitively, "There is something up between you and Milly—what is it?"

Pennie answered: "Nothing."

"Greeting over spilt milk—just like women," rejoined he.

Millicent sat opposite to them, her face as white as her white dress, but talking nervously fast, and laughing far more than was her wont, under the surprised observation of others besides Tom Martineau.

It seemed as if the great Christmas pasty and the boar's head never would be cut up and eaten; as if the toasts and speeches never would be done. But there is an end to everything under the moon as well as under the sun, and that famous supper came to a close at last, and with it the night's chequered festivities.

Millicent and Pennie were amongst the earliest to beat a retreat to their room. For an hour they sat talking by the fire; but as soon as they got into bed Pennie fell into the sleep of healthful weariness. She had not slept long, however, before she was reawakened by the sound of voices on the terrace under the window, and then the stilly darkness of the Christmas morning was broken by a loud-sung carol. Both she and Millicent rose to peep out at the waits, who stood in a ring on the lawn. Snow was falling, and the stable lantern they carried gave a light so

dim, that to Pennie not a face was discernible. But when they had watched about a minute, Millicent dropped the curtain with a shuddering cry that Michael Forester was amongst the singers.

The night got over somehow—Pennie even slept —but when they made their appearance at breakfast, and everybody was wishing everybody else a happy Christmas, Millicent's pale cheek and nervous eye could not escape anxious remark from the Dame; but as she persisted that nothing ailed her, save the drowsy consequences of a disturbed night, she was let alone. Only Uncle Christopher quizzed her a little, and prophesied that Brackenfield would hear of something to astonish it by-and-by,—a new lover perhaps—who could tell? During the prayers in church, he regarded her too with a mischievous intelligence. Pennie walked home with him after service, in stern, silent displeasure, and was not propitiated when he bade her smoothe down her prickles for a little fretful porcupine. She would have liked to consult him about the ghost, but there was no encouragement in his rallying tone to enter on so serious a theme.

Round the blazing Yule-logs, after dinner, somebody proposed stories; and nerve-thrilling legends, new and old, were recounted until Pennie's turn came, and found her dumb. Tom Martineau asked if she had no spiritual reminiscences to narrate, when Uncle Christopher answered for her: "Not she, the little infidel, she believes in nothing!" on which she looked guilty, and quavered out, No, she did not—expecting the phantom-face to confront her with the wicked equivocation on her lips. She wished bed-time were twenty years off, yet when it came to good-night, Uncle Christopher, as if he uncannily divined her thoughts, whispered: "Don't be afraid, Pennie, the ghost is shut up in the kitchen-clock, and won't molest you if you say your prayers." He had some equally irreverent speech to make to Millicent, who had a sad sleepless night of it. Pennie dropped her head on the pillow, and knew nothing more till morning, when she woke so hale and sprightly that she was half in a mind to deride the vision, while Millicent's wearied nerves were more than ever sensitive to impressions of pain and terror.

There was a beautiful walk in summer down one of the rides through the wood which skirted the Forester estates, but in winter, it was commonly avoided as damp and dismal. After luncheon, however, when Millicent invited Pennie to turn out with her, she proposed going in that direction. Pennie consented, but not cheerfully. The open expanse of the park would have been pleasanter,—looking forward to the haunted hours that would soon be upon them in the short December day. Under the firs, ladened with their frozen white Christmas fruitage, the ground was clear, but the wind whistled with a shrill music such as it is far more agreeable to hear, sitting in a cosy chimney-corner, than when it meets you in the teeth. With their cloaks drawn close, and their heads bent down, they battled against it to the end of the ride, and across a meadow dotted with fine park timber. Park in a fashion it was still, being only divided by a sunk fence, from the neglected gardens of the Lodge—the place that would have been Millicent Hutton's home had she married Michael Forester. It was uninhabited now, and had been so ever since he left

England, except by the bailiff and his wife. Sir Gilbert, it was reported, meant now to destroy the pretty pleasure-grounds, and to turn the place into a farmstead. The change had been spoken of at dinner the night before, as likely to be taken in hand when the frost broke up, and Millicent wished to see the gardens again before the desecration began. They entered by a rustic gate and bridge across the sunk-fence, and coming round from the back of the house, strayed along a broad walk below the windows of the principal rooms, now all silent, shuttered and dark.

What a melancholy place is a deserted house! The dead leaves had apparently been allowed to gather the autumn through, and the snow now covered them where they lay in drifts along the foot of the wall. The wind had torn away the ivy from the south-west corner of the house, where it had been left hanging and flapping in the wild gusts like a flag of distress. It was not until they turned round by the east end that they came on any cheerful signs of habitation. Then from a wide, unscreened window, belonging to what was Michael Forester's study in

his early days of possession, they saw a ruddy glow streaming abroad into the winter's cold. Pennie would have avoided the room, supposing it to be occupied by some of the bailiff's family, but Millicent wanted to see his wife, and passing close by the window, they involuntarily glanced in—glanced in to see the tall figure of a man reading by the fire, and to see that awful grey face, more like death than ever, lift itself up and slowly turn to look who came between him and the fast fading light of the afternoon. They got away from the place in haste, and never word uttered they, until they were within sight and sound of home. Uncle Christopher was the only person in the hall when they entered. He asked where they had been, and when Pennie told him, Millicent burst into tears.

"Tut, tut, what's all this about?" cried the old worldling, in anything but a sympathizing tone, and then, in the words of the old song, reminded her that,—

Violets plucked, the sweetest showers will ne'er make grow again.

They left him, and retreated to their room, which

Millicent quitted no more that day. She would have no one to keep her company but the ancient family nurse, who believed in many things but imperfectly known in our philosophy, and whose talk was not calculated to settle startled nerves. She gave it as her opinion that Michael Forester had died with something on his mind, which he now sought to communicate to his capricious mistress—"for capricious you was, Miss Milly, and used him very hard, there's no gainsaying," was her ultimatum.

That some mystery was afloat had now become plain to all the world at Brackenfield. "What *is* it?" asked Captain Blake next morning, almost testily. "The house seems to be standing on tiptoe with expectant alarm. There's Millicent taking her cup of tea in bed, there's Pennie as solemn as an owl, there's nurse going about upstairs in shoes of silence bidding the children *Whisht!* If anybody has seen a ghost, as rumour whispers, pray confess it, and let us hunt the shabby rascals who frighten ladies, out of their lair. For as for ghosts, bless you, they're knaves ingrain, no more bullet proof than you or I. Show me your ghost, and I'll abolish him,

I'll cause him to efface himself. Now, Quixote, I shall begin with you—look me straight in the face, and don't prevaricate, but be pleased to tell what makes your droll little phiz as grave as a mustard-pot?"

Thus adjured, Pennie eclipsed herself in her coffee-cup, and Uncle Christopher interposed with—"Say nothing, Pennie, it is grand to keep a secret."

"There is a ghost, depend upon it," added the Captain. "Let us all open our eyes, and be on the look-out for him."

Here the dame considerately said, she wished they would remember there were children in the room. There *were* children in the room, listening with ears on the stretch. Little Lois, indeed, began to lisp an account of a *ghost* she had seen, but when comically requested to be precise in her description of him, she could only put up her hands and gasp, until Geoffrey cut her short by saying that she meant bo-peep behind the curtains. Playing at ghosts was the favourite game that day, and when Pennie took a walk with the youngsters, she was impressed for the chief character, and required to march with stiff

legs, and solemn features to the roll of Geoffrey's drum.

They wandered a long way, and returned by the woods, which were pleasant in the frosty sunshine since the wind had sunk. Pennie gathered the first snow-drops of the season, peeping up amidst pale green leaves at the sheltered roots of the trees. Anna and Lois kept her company while the boys made wider excursions on their own account. After one prolonged absence, they returned to the girls proclaiming that they had seen such a strange-looking man, with a face the colour of stone, a hat like Robinson Crusoe, and a bear's cloak on his shoulders. He was leaning over the gate into the meadow, and stared at them very hard, but did not speak.

"Perhaps he is the new farmer who is coming to the Lodge," suggested Francis.

"Perhaps he is the *ghost*," said Maurice, and then they scampered off again, laughing and fearless.

But Pennie was not laughing. She was chilled to the very marrow of her bones; for she perceived that to these unromantic, unimaginative boys also

had been revealed the dreadful phantom-shape of Michael Forester. But stay, *phantom-shape!* Could it possibly be Michael in the body, the very Michael himself that was never dead?

The idea made her heart jump, and off home she started with joyful hurry to communicate it to Millicent. But when she saw Millicent's forlorn face, somehow her own buoyant hope collapsed. The dame and Theodora were with her trying, without seeming to try, to entice her into cheerfulness. It was too bad, everybody said, to have dear Aunt Milly in the dumps at Christmas time. Only Uncle Christopher chuckled, and did not care. Before lunch Pennie being left with her a minute alone, proposed that if they were bantered any more, they should make a clean breast of the whole affair, and Millicent consented, only stipulating that Pennie should be spokeswoman.

In the afternoon snow fell again, and games in the hall were the order of the day for the children. The elders, who could endure the clamour, congregated there as well; some of them even taking part in the sports. The younger ladies made belief at

work and conversation round the fire, until Uncle Christopher, who was playing chess with Sir Andrew, exclaimed—"The sky will fall next: I heard Quixote sigh!" At that provocation, there bubbled up in her a spirit of defiance, and wagging her head, she retorted—"You would sigh too, sir, and perhaps have a fit, if you had seen what Milly and I have seen four times since Christmas Eve! Either Michael Forester's spirit is haunting Brackenfield, or Michael Forester himself, no more dead than we are."

They all looked serious enough now, except Uncle Christopher, who said in his quizzical way, "Quixote, your wickedness passes conception! How dare you insinuate that a man may be alive whose monument is on the Church wall? I should like to know where you expect to go to?"

"It would be awkward for a fellow to turn up after the heir had taken possession," observed Sir Andrew.

"Don't talk so lightly," interposed the dame; "there is no chance that poor Michael will return now."

"More unlikely events have occurred in families than the re-appearance of a member supposed to be dead. I could give you an authentic instance myself," began Sir Andrew. But his anecdote was not encouraged, for all were eager to hear Pennie's story. When she came to the glimpse of the spectre they had had at the lodge, Uncle Christopher's patience gave way. He declared he could not stand such nonsense any longer, and demanded that Tom Martineau should come out with him even in the wind and the snow to blow away the cobwebs that little spider (meaning Pennie,) was trying to weave over their wits. After that, all the gentlemen dropt off rapidly, and the womenkind were left alone to the discussion of Pennie's narrative, until the children fell tired of their romps, and insisted on fairy-tales and riddles in the twilight until the dressing-bell rang, when young and old trooped upstairs together.

Millicent and Pennie were the last to descend to the drawing-room, and it struck Pennie oddly that her companion had become the centre of most demonstrative caresses. Theodora kissed her;

Helen wreathed an arm round her waist; Grace cooed at her with sweet words. The dame complacently predicted that she would soon be herself again, and Uncle Christopher, with an unwonted touch of sentiment, tucked her hand under his arm, and patting it, bade her look more sprightly for a picture of winter in her all-white robes, with the ruby-dropt holly spray in her hair. Theodora, the most tender-hearted of women, had tears in her eyes through dinner; and of the rest, those who did not look joyous, looked mysteriously important. Pennie might have asked now if *they* had seen a ghost; and she did at last intimate to Captain Blake that if anything was going to happen, she should like to know; but he only whispered with a tantalizing air—"I shall not tell you, little quiz. When you had a secret you kept it four days; now it is our turn, and we can keep one too."

When the ladies rose to leave the table the dame took Millicent's arm to cross the hall. For a miracle none of the children were downstairs; but Helen and Grace were in and out of the drawing-room half-a-dozen times, though both their babies were safe

abed. Even grandmamma, so drowsy after dinner on ordinary occasions, was now perfectly wide awake, and trotted twice to the door, and opened it to listen to the voices and laughter that issued from the dining-room. Their restlessness communicated itself to Millicent, and when she heard Uncle Christopher's deep bass approaching, supported by a hum of lower tones, she could not help quaking with a vague expectancy of she knew not what. Instantly Helen and Grace ran out, and the dame, holding Milly's hand, followed. Pennie pursued them, of course; when, behold, there, in the middle of the half-gloom of the hall, stood the *ghost*—no ghost at all, but a man enveloped in a cavalry-cloak powdered with snow, and on his head a Panama hat which he was just in the act of plucking off.

"Who's this, Milly?" cried the Squire; and Millicent, tall, pale, in her white robes spectral, melted, vanished, disappeared somehow amongst the great folds of Michael's cloak, and never again quite emerged into a distinct identity. It was a reconciliation by surprise, and no after-thought could undo it.

"Forgive and forget," said Uncle Christopher. "Kiss and make friends; you are under the mistletoe, and it is Christmas time, Milly. Rare fun, Quixote, isn't it? Get away, you round-eyed little elf, and don't talk of seeing ghosts. Is he behaving like a ghost? Milly never would have been caught without a stratagem; but now it is done, I hope you like the dramatic conclusion?"

Dramatic conclusion, indeed! It was lucky Millicent was past hearing the triumphant boast. It was Pennie's firm belief that Uncle Christopher knew from the beginning of their terrors that Michael Forester *was*, and was no ghost, and that it had pleased his perversity to study Millicent's pains and repentance, before he told anybody the secret of her lover's return. But he never would confess it—never.

The children laughed and were glad over the event of this reunion without well knowing why, but Penelope Croft, who was already somewhat of a philosopher, cried with Millicent for sympathy, and said, now she should always have faith in the happy possibilities of life, let it look ever so blank, since even sometimes the long dead came back.

"Oh, the lost years, the lost years, Pennie," sobbed her sweet companion; "the lost years and the *change!*" That was the burthen of her regret and her complaint. Pennie sighed and said nothing, and presently fell asleep.

The morrow came—such a strange new morrow to Millicent, who had a bewildered air of walking amongst shadows; and a yet stranger new morrow to the Eastwold children, who were to return home that day, packed in the old yellow chariot.

They had rejoiced to come to merry Christmas Brackenfield; they now equally rejoiced to go. A week's distance lent enchantment to the view of the dreary house on the hill, where they had left papa and mamma. The little ones watched for an hour from the hall-window, before the lean posters that were to carry them away, came with a shambling trot to grandpapa's door. "Good-by! Good-by! Good-by!" rang from all tongues in chorus. Then were the last kisses, and the tumblings into the chariot, so musty and fusty, and anxious final investigations by Theodora into the warmth of wraps, and a futile warning to Penelope Croft not to achieve

the windy, cold solitude of the rumble; then a quick, "Are you all right?" from Uncle John, and an, "Off with you!" from Uncle Christopher, and away they whirled in the clear blue morning, as laughing and jubilant as when papa and mamma, standing on the steps at Eastwold, had seen their sunny faces fade in a mist of tears—sunny faces that as little children's faces, papa was to see never more—never more.

II.

EASTWOLD HOUSE IN DECAY.

Penelope Croft had the best of it in the rumble. There was an immense confusion of tongues within the chariot. That peculiar young-woman in certain peculiar moods much affected her own society. The blast blew with a capricious keenness, and swayed heavily in the tall firs of the Brackenwood. Soon that was out of sight. A gradual ascent lay long in front, with round white hills swelling up on either hand. Glimpses of life peeped out here and there from the sheltered hollows, where the golden-brown stacks of last harvest, now all hooded with snow, were ranged in goodly ranks about the farmsteads. Penelope's heart warmed to their look of homely comfort; for her earliest and pleasantest reminiscences were of child-life in a farm. What set her musing

of it now, when there was Millicent Hutton to think of, and her wedding, that was no doubt to be soon? She did not know. But her fancy would fly over hill and dale far faster than the posters, and drop her in the midst now of a noisy sheep-washing at the beck; then perch her a-top of a hay-wain rolling sluggishly home from the water-meads; and again, set her in a low, old-fashioned parlour at the knees of a comely, cherry-cheeked dame, who was her mother. Then Pennie wished herself going home to the dear old Crofts of Craven, who were of her own blood, instead of to the gentlefolks at Eastwold, who were kind enough, but not kin.

Had fortune used the little woman considerately in making her a rich heiress, and setting her in a place to which she was not born? Pennie thought not. She felt often lonely. If only she had been pretty, or graceful, or engaging! But she was none of these things. She was only *queer*. Her face provoked many a furtive smile—there was nothing in nature more grotesque than Pennie's face when she was pathetic. She knew fortune was not in the habit of consulting her clients as to what lot she should

give them, but if she could have chosen hers, she would have been interesting and *poor*. She was already more interesting than she knew. A woman always is interesting who has heaps of money, let her be as ugly as she may. Even her guardian had many a time privately wished his son Francis were of an age to go a-wooing to his ward. But Francis was only a rough, hungry schoolboy, with his heart in his stomach yet, and Pennie was just eighteen and sentimental.

How had Pennie come by her heiress-ship? That is soon told. Her father, Jonathan Croft, tenant-farmer at Mayfield, had followed the plough in peace, prosperity, and contentment for a score of years. The railway mania set in. He was smitten with the gold-fever; he thirsted to become rich, drew his thrifty savings out of the Norminster Bank, invested them in scrip, bought and sold, and bought and sold again, and in a few months achieved a wonderful great fortune. He did not live to lose it again, but died literally of amazement at his good-luck; never having seemed to realize it in any comfortable form, but only as a means of buying up Wynyard of East-

wold—Wynyard of Eastwold being the name most honoured in those parts since feudal days.

Another idea that possessed his half-paralysed brain was that his daughter Pen must be a lady. He sent for the Squire, and begged him to accept her as his ward. The Squire was astonished and a little vexed. He was not a man who loved business. He said he would consult Hargrove—Hargrove was his factotum. Hargrove suggested that it might be an excellent thing. He went over to Mayfield, talked with Croft and his wife, and found that it might be even a better thing than he had thought. He wrote the old man's will, and when it came to be read after his death, the charge of Penelope was coupled with a bequest of two thousand pounds to the Squire and five hundred to the lawyer. There was plenty of gossip about it over pipes and at market dinners as a very queer will, which left the money too free to the handling even of trustees so honourable as Wynyard of Eastwold and Doctor Grey; but Hargrove was a cunning old file, bless you, and knew what he knew. Grey would never act, and he would have it all his own way; for the Squire did nothing without him.

Seventy thousand pounds! The little lass had seventy thousand pounds—not a penny less. And how that would grow before she came of age. Seventy thousand pounds! And the widow well left too; but tied up not to marry again. Jonathan Croft was a bit jealous, but not so far north as his neighbours would have expected—not nearly so far north. Trust, ay, *trust*—only let a man make sure where he trusts. Why wasn't his wife given any care over the lass? She came of a good family; she was a woman of sense. Ay, marry was she, and a downright hand at business. And her brother, Lister of Rood, would have made as honest a guardian for the lass as any squire in Craven. But where was the use of talking? Jonathan Croft had put a slight on his own folks and his wife's; but he had willed as he had willed, and Penelope was to be a lady.

Penelope was to be a lady. Her mother gave her up with a half sad, half proud reluctance, and the ugly little woman was carried away to Eastwold in the yellow chariot—a much more pompous and shining chariot then than now; for seven years' wear

and tear make a mighty difference in chariots, though they may leave ugly little women much the same for ugliness. And during those seven years there had been a gradual decay and blight creeping over the splendours of Eastwold, such as dim the glossy lacquer of chariots yellow or various, and the lacquer of all other things that need frequent gold-wash to keep them spruce. In fact, the mining property which had enriched the ancient house for generations was working out, and the Wynyards were going down in the world—*down*.

The children had not yet much character; but they had the germs of character. On the outside they were—the boys, noisy, domineering, fearless, generous; the girls, loving, obedient, prone to serve what they loved—all given to enjoy, and without the faintest, remotest idea of what signified self-denial, self-renunciation, or world's work of any sort. For were they not come of a master-race? The traditions of Eastwold were long and honourable. The children had been nurtured on them. It was as much an article of their faith as anything in the catechism that a Wynyard never had been and never

could be disloyal to king or church, to kindred or friend. They had commonly been found ranged on the losing side, and had shed their blood in many an historical quarrel on the field and on the scaffold; but their name remained to their posterity without spot and blameless. Not a bit of rusty old armour that hung about the old hall and on the old staircase but had been in its day the defence of a good man and true. Francis had already made up his mind that he was to be a soldier, and to tread in their steps; and Anna already looked to him as the hero who would perpetuate the glory of a long line.

In these hopeful visions of their fresh youth they almost lost sight of the cloud impending over the fortunes of Eastwold. There had been year by year a curtailing of their pleasures, but no complaining. Papa and mamma wrapt their robes of pride about them, and declined quietly from past prosperity. The children imitated the dignified example. When papa looked jaded and despondent, when mamma was tired and tearful, could they be grumbling and dissatisfied? Francis and Anna, at all events, were old enough to see and know better, and they did the

best they knew. The troubles that were coming on them would not be embittered by the worst of all wants—the want of love.

The January afternoon was trenching on twilight when the yellow chariot rattled up the white avenue to Eastwold door. For a marvel nobody was waiting to welcome the children—not even nurse. But before they could disentangle themselves and tumble out, it was opened by mamma in person—by mamma nicely dressed, and smiling, as if she had just come down from her room. She was smiling, but it was a smile so forced that Francis immediately said, "What is the matter, mamma? Where is papa?"

"He has gone on a journey, dear; I will tell you about it by-and-by. Come in now — tea will soon be ready, with ham and eggs, in the drawing-room. I am sure you are hungry;" and then Mrs. Wynyard broke off suddenly, with a quiver in her voice, looking round upon them all half bewildered.

"Tea in the drawing-room, mamma; shall we have it with you?" cried Lois, delighted.

"With me, my winter blossom," responded Mrs. Wynyard, and took her youngest child in her arms. It seemed to Lois, Maurice, and Geoffrey that mamma was gay; but Francis and Anna looked at her and at each other, and felt that it was only fair-seeming to hide sharp suffering.

Nurse now came on the scene—nurse without any pretence at jollity. "You've gotten home, bairns," was her address; "you've had your bit of pleasure, and it's over."

"It is *over*, but we have had it," rejoined Geoffrey, mimicking her lugubrious tone.

Then there came inquiries about grandpapa and grandmamma, and the uncles, aunts, and cousins, which loosed all the young tongues, and set them going together on the eloquent theme of Brackenfield and its festivities. In the full midst of the gossip, nurse swept the chatterers off impatiently upstairs, to change their travelling garb for something more suitable to sit at tea in the drawing-room—in its way a treat worthy even to compare with those enjoyed in the hospitable Christmas Eden whence they were just returned. But the

check only invigorated their powers of speech. When they were re-collected round the table, with mamma presiding at the tea-board, and Anna dispensing fragrant collops, the loudness and fluency of Geoffrey and Maurice became quite stunning, deafening. Francis said little, but he thought the more. The irrepressible loquacity of his brothers annoyed him, because he saw the effort his mother had to make to bear it. She listened with a sweet patience; with a careful, self-watchful attention, dropping a question here, a word of wonder there, a note of admiration everywhere, as if fearing lest her children should detect some want, some loss.

"Oh, dear mamma, I love you; I am so happy," gushed Lois, presently, leaning a soft little cheek towards her, courting the caress which Mrs. Wynyard never withheld from her expectations. She took the darling into her lap now, and poured out second cups of tea with inconvenient satisfaction to them both.

Penelope Croft sat in her accustomed place, where she could turn on the water from the urn to replenish the pot, and cut fresh wedges of bread to appease,

if possible, those unappeasable young appetites. She had felt the atmosphere of restraint and pain the moment she came into the house. Nobody more sensitive to atmospheres and currents, whether literal or metaphorical, than Pennie. The result was perfect silence on her part. Millicent Hutton, Mayfield, every romantic or pathetic fancy that had kept her sweet company through the day's journey vanished now—out of sight, out of mind—under the influence of a very present but invisible disaster. All the Eastwold children had acquired that discretion of speech which lies in asking few questions. When they asked one, and were not directly answered, they never repeated or pressed it. Francis was exceedingly impatient to be alone with his mother, but his impatience sought no manifestation beyond an occasional reminder to Maurice that, while he talked so fast, he did not eat, and when all the rest had finished, he would be to wait for. That papa was gone on a journey was very new news to all of them; for Mr. Wynyard's travels had of late years never extended beyond the county town. But not one was tempted to inquire whither he

had gone after they had heard mamma promise to tell Francis by-and-by. Tea and talk over, they all gathered round the fire for a few minutes' longer realization of *real* home; then said good-night, Lois adding, with wistful entreaty, that she wanted to kiss papa.

"Kiss mamma for both, and I'll give you a ride upstairs pickaback," suggested Francis, and the little whimperer went off, exalted and exultant, her brief trouble forgotten in her big brother's wonderful condescension. Geoffrey and Maurice decamped also, but Pennie and Anna lingered, doubtful whether to go or stay. When Francis returned, shaking his locks into order after Lois's merciless tugging, Anna rose from the rug at her mother's feet, and decided to go. Pennie went with her, their consideration silently but significantly acknowledged.

Francis Wynyard had the privileges of an eldest son at Eastwold already. A very strong bond of affection and confidence subsisted between himself and his mother. If his father had talked with him less and less openly, it was from the natural

shrinking any man might feel at telling his heir that his inheritance was dwindling down to nothing; that the name which had descended to him, rich in honour, would pass from him, if not tarnished, at all events, lowered in the pride and pomp of circumstance, denuded of all the outward and visible appliances of rank. Francis understood the facts by inference, and through his mother's often encouragement to vigour of purpose and active self-reliance. That was why he had fixed his future hopes on the life of a soldier, instead of on the beatific visions of squiredom, which, under a continuance of the former order of things, would have been his easy, uneventful destiny. And he had just that amount of ardent, adventurous spirit which enabled him to see beforehand how there would be compensations in the change of estate.

"What has happened, mammy darling?" was his first address to his mother when they were left alone.

The answer was given with tears in her eyes and in her voice: "What I have long dreaded, Francis—your father has been obliged to go abroad. When we may see him again, God only knows."

Francis was silent for a minute or two, staring stoically into the fire. "I wish I were a man," said he.

"Six years to wait, my boy, but I can trust you when the time comes."

"I hope you can, mother. Eastwold may go, but 'honour shall bide,' as our motto says."

There was another long pause. Then Mrs. Wynyard—"Hargrove advised your father to go. He started at less than an hour's warning. Hargrove went with him."

"And you have been four days quite by yourself, mamma?"

"It is not known in the house yet that he may not return. Nurse guesses, perhaps, but of course——" She ceased.

There is always a feeling of shame, pain, disgrace, humiliation, in flight. Francis thought for a moment he would have rather stood the difficulty out. But he did not comprehend the difficulty. Nor could he tell by intuition what a tedious imprisonment within four walls is. Better any exile than that.

"And you have not sent word to grandpapa or Uncle Raymond, at Eskford?" he asked.

"No, I have done nothing. They cannot help us—nobody can help us but ourselves. I have been trying to see how we may do it best. And I think, if you agree with me, Francis, that the home-farm shall be let at Lady-day, and the park and gardens, and all the west-end of the house, as Hargrove proposed a year since. There would still be room enough left for us, and Pennie's pony must be kept."

"Then you do not think of our all going abroad to poor papa?"

"No, nor does he wish it. He would not like his boys or girls either to grow up half-vagabond English. We shall stay at Eastwold to the end; but if any accommodation can be made for his return before, Hargrove will not neglect it. I must think of my children now." In the last sentence there was a slight tone of resentment and injury which Francis did not fail to detect. Mrs. Wynyard had, in fact, been kept in the dark more than was either wise or just. She believed that had she

been trusted she might have averted some of their calamities, and it is very possible that she was right.

"No one can speak ill of papa as if our misfortunes were his fault, can they?" asked her son. She did not immediately reply. "No wrong has been done? tell me, mamma?" added Francis, more urgently and anxiously.

"It is hard to know beforehand what the world will think, or whom the world will blame. Men to whom large sums of money are owing will not be lenient judges. Hargrove was so sanguine about the yield of that new mine in Arkindale, that your father was entirely guided by him, and went to vast expense. There has been a fortune sunk in it, and lost; for the ore is inferior, and will never pay the cost of working. So Dixon, the foreman, says, yet Hargrove obstinately maintains his first opinion, and will not hear of shutting it up. The money borrowed to set it going is the present difficulty. The interest has not been regularly paid, and the lender dropt some threat at Norminster market, which came to Hargrove's ears. He drove over on Tuesday afternoon, and he and your father went off

to Kirkgate Station to catch the mail-train for London."

"You have a mighty strong faith in Hargrove, mamma," said Francis, with an impulse of youthful distrust.

"No, dear, less than you suppose. I did depend on him, but I see now where he has misled your father so often, that, though I hope and trust he is honest, I have no reliance on his judgment."

"Why did not papa see more to his own business? He could have understood it if he had tried."

"I used to urge it, Francis, but he had not been brought up to take trouble, and he avoided it. That is how it was; and Hargrove did as he liked. We had a large nominal income when we married, and I had a handsome settlement; but my trustees allowed the money to be put in the Arkindale working, when it looked a hopeful speculation, and it is as good as gone with the rest. Oh! my boy, that I must make you share my anxieties."

Francis put out his hand to his mother, and his eyes filled with tears. "It seems the saddest for poor papa. Do you know where he is?"

She shook her head. "We shall not hear until Hargrove comes home."

It was nine o'clock in the Eastwold drawing-room, and it was nine o'clock in the dreary little cabinet of the hotel at Dieppe, where Mr. Wynyard and Mr. Hargrove sat talking after a meagre dinner. Mr. Wynyard was a man who unconsciously owed much to his surroundings. In the faded elegance of his own house he looked the indolent, refined, anxious, helpless gentleman without any of the degradation of the character. He had drifted out of that atmosphere of repose now; he was in very different quarters, and he looked a different person. He felt it, and Hargrove felt it, and betrayed it too, by being more at his ease, and less deferential than was his wont towards Wynyard of Eastwold.

It snowed and it blew over the town in a whirlwind, and every now and then the gusts came hurling and skirling down the narrow street, like a legion of spirits driven from the sea by tormentors. There was no heartiness of warmth in the tiny porcelain stove, and Mr. Wynyard sat with a plaid about his shoulders, a picture of misery and dejection: his

cheeks blue, his nose red, his lips pinched and parched. His sudden flight — never contemplated before—had completely unnerved him. He knew it had opened a gulf in his life which could never be closed.

"I would rather have been carried to Eastwold Church: I would rather a thousand times have been carried to Eastwold Church," he had reiterated in monotonous soliloquy every hour since he had crossed the Channel. He was harping on the same string to-night, and talking of his poor wife and children as lost to him, until Hargrove, who had no wife or children, was aweary of the theme.

The lawyer was a tall, burly man with a red face, large features, and a big voice; a man to overbear opposition, and to get his own way in the world as much as any. He was making the best of circumstances now with brandy-and-water—not that there was anything oppressive in the circumstances to him. Indeed they were acceptable to him, and he said so. "It is a positive relief to me to know you are safe out of the way, sir. Jacques was growing troublesome: very troublesome indeed." Mr. Wynyard groaned.

"There is only one consolation—Penelope Croft's money is all safe," said he. Hargrove sipped his brandy-and-water. "That is safe, and not a shilling of it shall ever be risked. I wish she were of age, and I were quit of the burthen. It has been a care and a temptation to me from the beginning; but I am thankful now I listened to Mary—what *will* she do, what will she do, poor Mary!"

Two things Mr. Hargrove never did. He never used conventional phrases of piety, and he never told a lie to no purpose. Had he been inclined to put a gloss on untoward events, he might have reminded Mr. Wynyard how the wind is tempered to shorn lambs; but that was not his present object. He had brought him abroad, and it was his business to impress on him the necessity of staying there until the inclement wind changed into a milder quarter. Perhaps he had interests of his own to serve in that, as well as interests of his employer's.

He recurred to the subject of Mr. Wynyard's ward. "Jonathan Croft gave his daughter a long day to wait for her coming-of-age—five-and-twenty."

"But she may marry before, and that would

release me. At five-and-twenty, if she remain single, she is her own mistress, to set up an independent establishment, and to live where she likes. I hope she will marry."

"She is well weighted. I am not sure, though, that some of her money is not worse invested than it would be in Arkindale. Those West Lancashire railway-shares, for instance?"

"They are good shares enough. As for Arkindale, I wish it were at the bottom of the sea. That has been my misfortune. Arkindale will drag down Eastwold."

"You are wrong, sir, you are wrong there. I'll back Arkindale to do as well or better yet than ever the old Crosfell pits did. And you are wrong, too, in not employing your ward's money to better advantage for her."

"Her money is where her father wished it to be, chiefly in the three per cents., and there it shall remain. Mind, Hargrove, I will not have it meddled with, whatever might be rescued by it. My own and my children's—that is wreck enough. If her fortune were in it, too, that would be dishonour; that would

be roguery." Mr. Wynyard spoke with excitement, the lawyer sipped his brandy-and-water; the clock ticked, the stove hummed; the wind whistled and rattled the casement. "*Roguery*, I say. If they must weep, they need not blush. Poor souls, poor souls."

Mr. Hargrove left Mr. Wynyard at Dieppe, and returned to England by the Newhaven boat on the morrow. He transacted some business in London, and the same evening departed for Norminster; slept there, and reached the Kirkgate Station in the morning by eleven. Francis Wynyard, at his mother's suggestion, had walked thither each day, to intercept him, and ask him to take Eastwold in his way round to his own house at Allan Bridge. As the lawyer got out of the carriage, he saw Francis, and hailed him. The lad came forward, and colouring as he shook hands, said: "Your gig is waiting outside—will you drive by Eastwold, and see my mother?"

"To be sure—that was my intention. She is anxious, of course. Jack, put my bag and this hamper into the trap. She must not take it too much to heart. You'll ride, Francis?"

"No, I will walk back across the fell as I came. I shall be there almost as soon as you."

"The roads are bad, I dare say. Got the mare sharped, Jack? All right—jump in. It's a biting wind. Phew!"

Francis was gone before Mr. Hargrove had settled himself in his seat, and when the gig turned in at the lodge-gates, there he was in the porch talking with Crabtree, the tough old man who had been now for several months past the only gardener, groom, gamekeeper, and general helper out of doors that Eastwold retained. A shrewd and bitter character he was, with a snap and a snarl at the service of all the world except his master, his master's wife, and his master's children—amongst whom he reckoned Penelope Croft. Mr. Wynyard's hasty and unexplained departure had annoyed him beyond measure—it was not like the ways of the house to do anything without a reason. Mr. Hargrove passed through the gate, his loud greeting acknowledged only by a grunt, and as he drove slowly up the avenue, with Francis walking alongside the gig, Crabtree soliloquized after him: "*Thou's* at the

bottom o' all the trouble that's coming upon 'em. *Ay*, my lad, if I only had thee where I could squeeze a secret or too out o' thy lieing throat! Boy and man, I ha' been on the place a good forty year, an' niver heerd tell o' any mystery about it before. Speak truth, an' shame the divil—that's my motto. Where there's a mystery there's mischief, an' I'll rout it out, if I be smothered wi' t' smoak."

Francis sought his mother in the drawing-room: "He is coming," said he, and they entered the library together at one door as Mr. Hargrove presented himself at the other. He was prepared to be sympathetic and cordial, but Mrs. Wynyard was concisely calm, and gave him no opportunity.

"Take a chair near the fire, Mr. Hargrove, and let me hear how and where you left my husband."

"I left him at Dieppe, and well," was the answer following her cue. "At the Hôtel Sauvage."

"Mamma, here's uncle John," suddenly cried Francis, who commanded a window with a view of the avenue. "He has ridden Malek over, the beauty!"

"Mr. John Hutton?" asked the lawyer, with a perceptible inflection of alarm in his voice.

"Nothing could have happened more opportunely," said Mrs. Wynyard. "Go, Francis, and bring your uncle in."

Francis was already going, and in a minute or two, the opportune visitor appeared.

"I am sorry to hear your news, Mary," said he, kissing her; "and I am bound to tell *you*, Mr. Hargrove, that you have advised Wynyard very ill. He could not have taken a more unfortunate step than to go abroad at this moment."

"If you think so, he is not a prisoner; he can come back," replied the lawyer, promptly, at the same time resolving that it should be his first business to make such a coming back impossible, except under risks that he knew Mr. Wynyard would not encounter. In that brief passage of arms the men had measured each other's strength, and Mr. John Hutton retreated a little.

"You ought to know best how the land lies; but if he had come to Brackenfield for advice, he would not have found one of us to bid him leave home, much less leave it secretly."

"He had not the chance of consulting anybody.

I gave him certain information, and he acted on it as we both judged best in the emergency. The other side of the water is better than the inside of Norminster jail." The last sentence was uttered roughly and sullenly. The lawyer had determined on his line. Mr. John Hutton had not received any invitation to interfere in the affairs of his brother-in-law, and he would not encourage him to interfere by using a humble propitiatory tone.

A bell rang in the hall. Mrs. Wynyard rose, saying it was for the children's dinner; would they go into the room, and have some luncheon. Mr. Hargrove excused himself; he was within a couple of miles of home, and would drive on, he thanked her.

"Surly dog, that Hargrove," said Mr. John Hutton, as he accompanied his sister to the dining-room.

"I would rather not have him offended," was Mrs. Wynyard's reply. "You do not know how much he has in his power—I do not know myself, but I fear."

At present he had it in his power to disseminate

the news of Mr. Wynyard's journey to France, and to colour it with that tint of nefarious evasion which is most damaging to a man's good name. As he mounted into his gig, he only shook his head as if involuntarily, but Jack saw and understood, talked, and exaggerated, when he went to the "Wynyard Arms" at night for his pipe and pot of beer. The next morning a neighbour dropped into his office early, and after a few inconsequential remarks, came to the point.

"So Mr. Wynyard has gone on a trip to France, I hear? Bad time of year for a jaunt, eh, Hargrove?"

"That depends on what you go for. Some business won't wait. When did you see Jacques last?"

"At Norminster market on Saturday."

The neighbour put the lawyer's words, tone, and look together; deduced therefrom that Mr. Wynyard had found it advisable to go out of the way for a time, and circulated his intelligence in that form. Before noon, it came round again to Eastwold still further simplified.

"So t' Squire's rinned away fra' his debts," said a lurching fellow, the poacher and pest of the dale, to old Crabtree, whom he met on the road to Allan Bridge.

"Yo' tak' thot," retorted Crabtree, and straightway knocked him down, and marched on.

It was soon no secret anywhere, or in any company, that Squire Wynyard had gone to France, and that no definite time was fixed for his return. Mr. Hargrove had to hear fifty hard and sharp inquiries during the ensuing fortnight, and to answer them or evade them as he could. Jacques was more troublesome than ever.

"Look you here, Hargrove, didn't you swear when I give notice, that my brass was as safe as if it ha' been in the Bank of England. Mind you, I mun have it as t' first of last November six months. Them was the terms—six per cent, and six months' notice to pay."

"You can have it, but I advise you to leave it where it is," was the lawyer's cool rejoinder.

"I don't heed what you advise—you'd advise a fellow to put his cargo aboord a leaky ship if t' was

your own. If Mr. Wynyard means fair, what has he taken himself off to France for? Who was going to touch him?"

"Come, Jacques, you're a man of business, you are, and should know better than to ask questions of that sort."

"You won't bamboozle *me*. I ask questions because I heerd at Norminster market o' Thursday that *I'd* threatened to put the screw on Mr. Wynyard. I never threatened nothing o' t' sort. I couldn't put t' screw on him until notice is up. There is agents shifty enough to befool both lenders an' borrerers. There is one in this parish who'd make a rogue the less if he was out of it. I've said my say, Mr. Hargrove, an' if you like, you can charge it as a consultation in the bill."

Thus far Jacques in a cold fury, and then forth he lurched, the stumpy grazier, out of the office into the town-street of Allan Bridge. A hundred yards or so from Hargrove's door, he met Morris, landlord of the "Wynyard Arms."

"Can you tell a fellow what the damage 'ud be to kick a 'torney?" chuckled he, indicating with his

thumb pointed over his shoulder what '*torney* he meant.

"Maybe thirty shillings," grinned Morris.

"And very cheap at the money."

"The North Riding man had however too shrewd an eye to the main chance to waste cash on the indulgence of a whim, and having relieved his feelings by mentioning it, he began to talk of fat cattle at the London Christmas Show, and the landlord being interested to hear, they adjourned to the bar-parlour to have a comfortable glass and pipe with their gossip.

At Eastwold Rectory, between Doctor and Mrs. Brown, in half the drawing-rooms of Craven, in every hunting-field, Mr. Wynyard's travels and their motive were a nine days' talk and wonder. His half-brothers, Mr. Raymond, of Eskford, and Dr. Raymond, vicar of St. Jude's, and master of Chassell's School at Norminster, came over to Eastwold in consternation, and found Mrs. Wynyard and the children almost as much resigned to their abandonment as if they were widowed and fatherless.

"It is done," said the mother; "and for the

present it must remain. It does not appear that it would be safe for him to return."

"Perhaps not, just when people are alarmed, but why did he ever go?" said Mr. Raymond. "I shall start for Dieppe myself and see Robert. I have had an interview with Hargrove, but he is so close there is no getting an accurate notion of anything from him. I wish Robert would consent to a thorough overhauling of Hargrove's books. He was always muddle-headed about business himself, and has been quite at his agent's mercy all along."

Mrs. Wynyard shook her head: "I do not think you will prevail on him to do anything that might vex Hargrove. He has the most bigoted confidence in him." She was right. Mr. Raymond took his journey, but it was to no purpose.

"Hargrove is the only man who understands the mining property thoroughly," the expatriated gentleman declared. "He has been engaged in it since my father's time. He has sunk money of his own in Arkindale, and if anything can be made out of it, he is the person to make it. He has his own way of going on, and I cannot at this moment see

how any of you can do more than be civil to him, and let him try his best. There is a great deal owing, and I feel as if he were the only bar that stands between us and ruin—ruin complete and irrevocable." Thus Mr. Wynyard spoke to his brother, thus he wrote to his wife, to the old Squire at Brackenfield, to every one who had a right to address him on the subject of his embarrassments.

On his return from Dieppe, Mr. Raymond went over again to Eastwold, and told Mrs. Wynyard what he had seen and heard. "There is nothing for it but patience and submission, Mary. You and the children must live quietly on here, and Robert will stay about in Normandy until a way is opened for his return, or until Francis is of age, and can join him in breaking the entail, and selling the property. I am truly glad to know, for everybody's sake, that not a sixpence of your little ward's fortune has been risked in Robert's affairs. He has proved a wiser trustee for her than John Hutton and I for your marriage-settlement. If that money be finally lost, we shall make it up to you amongst us." And there, for the present, was a pause in the Eastwold family affairs.

III.

PENELOPE AT MAYFIELD.

Mr. Wynyard stayed about in Normandy, and by-and-by his household settled into its new routine. The Christmas holidays came to an end. Francis, Geoffrey, and Maurice went back to school—the Grammar School at Allan Bridge, where they boarded with the head-master, Dr. Tasker. Miss Rosslyn, the girls' governess, did not return, Mrs. Wynyard having decided that she must teach Anna and Lois herself henceforward. As for Penelope Croft, her elementary education might be considered as finished, and any learning she wanted further it was in her own power to acquire from books, of which there was no lack in her guardian's house.

Pennie had none of the polite accomplishments. She played on the piano with a wooden finger, her

voice was untuneable, she had no eye for perspective on paper, and her dancing was as queer as her countenance. Miss Rosslyn had laboured at her in vain.

"She is a good girl, and a clever girl in her way, but she knows nothing beyond the three R's—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic," said the painstaking, disappointed woman, feebly joking.

"Say the *four R's*, and add riding—I can do almost anything with a horse," cried Pennie, who overheard her.

Do almost anything with a horse! She might have said, too, that she could do almost anything with a tree, a wall, a hurdle to climb, a race to run, a boat to row, a bird to shoot, a dog to break. These things came natural to her. It was a thousand pities she was not a boy, for she never would be a lady. It was, however, within the limits of possibility that she might be a straightforward, practical, honest little gentlewoman; and as she grew up, it became more and more certain every day that this was what she would be. Small, plain, outspoken, romantic, generous, simple, courageous, dutiful — those were the outlines of Mr.

Wynyard's ward, when his circumstances and Mr. Hargrove's alarm drove him into exile.

Pennie was likely to feel his absence less than anybody at Eastwold. She was *out*. That had been accomplished the previous October, at the Norminster Hunt Ball, when she was pronounced by a high provincial authority, the ugliest three-year-old he had ever seen, but with a pot of money, and no end of fun in her. Her mother, who still presided in rosy widowhood and prosperity over Mayfield Farm, was kept well informed of every event that transpired at Eastwold. News of Mr. Wynyard's journey reached her through the usual channel—the weekly letter from her daughter—and common fame told her the rest. She was not disposed to be anxious about Pennie's fortune, but she was very much disposed to bewail her prospects.

"Why, the house'll be ever so dull; there'll be no company for her, poor thing, no *beaux*, nor nothing." Thus she opened her mind to her confidential gossip, Mrs. Jones, of Beckby Farm. She had set her heart on Pennie's marrying early.

"Then I shall, maybe, get her more to myself," was her wily expectation.

"It wasn't fair of Jonathan, was it, Mrs. Jones, to take the bairn away from us all, for her to grow up a stranger to her own mother and kin? Not that she's proud, bless her, not a bit of it! She's the same with one as with another, for she has got a real sensy head of her own, just like her father. If she were only bonny! She'd better have taken after Listers than after Crofts. Listers has all clean skins, and wears well; Crofts is sallow, and ages soon. I don't want her to marry high—there'd be no comfort if she married high. I should like to see her take up with Mr. Tom Boothby now, or her cousin, Dick Lister. I could go to their houses, and feel at home with my own child. But if she was to take up with a dandy fellow, such as young Raymond at Eskford, or Captain Bangham, with his great red beard, she'd be further off nor ever.'

"Get her over to Mayfield for a week or two," suggested Mrs. Jones, entering cordially into her neighbour's feelings. "I'll give the young folks a dance and a supper, and I'm sure her Aunt Lister'll

do the same. If it was *me* was her mother, I should be all for keeping the money in the family. Dick Lister's a ra'el fine fellow, and good-looking; Tom Boothby tosses a glass overmuch sometimes, and he's a dreadful temper."

"Then I'd rather see her in her coffin than tied to him; for bad temper in a man is what I can't abide. Jonathan had his faults—who's without? but grumbling and nattering was never one of 'em. He was the satisfiedest man at home that you'd wish to see. Penelope has just his easy way — so considerate she always is."

"She is a nice little lass. It is only a pity she does not favour more of your fam'ly, Mrs. Croft; though she hasn't to sing like a many gels, 'my face is my fortune, sir, she said.'"

"We got churning over'd to-day. If weather holds up, I'll take a drive to Eastwold to-morrow, and bring her back."

"*Do.* You'll not repent it."

The weather did hold up, and in the morning at eleven o'clock, Mrs. Croft mounted into the high phaeton which it was her custom to drive herself, and,

with a lad in the back-seat to open the gates, set forth on her mission. She was in full visiting costume—velvet bonnet and feather, scarlet Paisley shawl, ruby satinette gown, "stiff enough to stand of itself," and new, pale driving-gloves. The mare was a beauty; the harness silver-plated; the whole turn-out well-to-do and well kept. Everybody who met the comfortable widow on her way greeted her cordially and respectfully. She had her half-crown ready for Crabtree, in case he was at the lodge, and even that cranky personage abated his asperity under the glow of her broad and beaming countenance. He condescended to touch his hat as he accepted the fee, and to add for information that Miss Pennie and Miss Anna were about in the park "a-gathering of snow-drops."

"I shall meet them, I dessay;" and nodding her thanks, Mrs. Croft drove gently on, keeping a look-out on either side between the trees for her daughter.

Pennie espied her first. "Oh, Anna, there's my mother!" and away she ran, dropping the flowers from her basket as she went, and jumped up into the

phaeton with a spring, almost knocking the velvet bonnet from its propriety in the ardour of her embrace.

"Eh, Pennie, my darling, bless thee!" gasped the widow. "There now—easy, easy, whoa, easy, I say," to the mare. "Sit down, Pennie. How d'ye do, Miss Anna? She's fresh: easy, easy—she hasn't been out of stable three or fower days. And how are you, honey, and how are they all?"

"She'll be off again, mother, mind her." The mare gave her driver enough to do for the next minute or two, and then they were at the door. The lad held her head while his mistress alertly extracted herself from her wraps and descended, and then he led her away to the stables, tossing and prancing, and ready for anything in the way of high jinks.

"She has a hard mouth, that's the worst of her," observed the widow, watching solicitously. "It isn't temper, she has no vice, and Ned's steady enough. Well, Pennie, my love, I'm come to beg a holiday for you. I want you at Mayfield a bit. Will Mrs. Wynyard spare you, d'ye think?"

"Oh, yes. Come into the house; it is *so* different now." The last sentence was whispered sadly and confidentially, and was acknowledged by a pathetic closing of the widow's eyes, and shaking of her head.

"I've heard all, Pennie. It can't help but be different. What's doing here?" They were now in the hall, where a man was at work with lath and plaster, closing up the dining-room door.

"That side of the house is to be let with the farm to Mr. Dykes, and so it is to be quite shut off from our part." Mrs. Crofts shook her head again, and sighed, but said no more. Pennie entered the drawing-room, and announced her mother, who dropt a little curtsey as she advanced to meet Mrs. Wynyard's outstretched hand.

"I am glad to see you, Mrs. Croft, and so, from her face, is Pennie. Take your mother's shawl, Pennie dear, and give her a stool for her feet. You must have had a cold drive, I'm afraid: the wind is rather high;" thus Mrs. Wynyard in her usual kind way, only perhaps in a voice somewhat strained, as of a woman fretting inwardly.

"It was not unpleasant; the sun warmed the air.

We are going to have fine, open weather after the frost, I hope. It is needed. And how are you, ma'am, and the children, and Mr. Wynyard when you heard from him?"

"All well in health, thank you, Mrs. Croft; quite well in health. Lois, you have not shaken hands with Mrs. Croft." As Mrs. Wynyard spoke, she glanced aside at the child, standing by the table with a slate, her hair ruffled up into a golden mop, and her face set determinedly over a line of figures which she was multiplying by seven. Lois half abstractedly laid her task down, crossed the rug to the visitor, and pouted her rosy lips to be kissed.

"She is a good little busy girl, I'm sure," said Mrs. Croft. "She loves her book, don't you, dear?"

"Not without Maurice," and Lois sighed, as she shook her mop, and resumed the slate.

Pennie sat unobtrusively on a low chair in the fireside corner by her mother, until the conversation wound round to her, and leave was asked and given for her to go to Mayfield. "Eastwold 'll spare you for a month, I dessay," added Mrs. Croft, with amiable insinuation.

Mrs. Wynyard assented. "Yes, we will spare her for a month, and then I think her services will be wanted at Brackenfield. My youngest sister is about to be married, and Pennie has been bespoken for one of her bridesmaids."

"Won't it be charming, mother? I have been longing to go to a wedding," cried Pennie, exuberant.

"I heerd of Mr. Michael Forester's arrival. And he's to marry Miss Hutton, is he? I'm right glad of it. Foresters is a good sort. But is it true, ma'am, that he's got a fam'ly by a black wife?"

"I hope not—I have not heard of it." Mrs. Wynyard could hardly forbear smiling, and Pennie looked amazed with wrath.

"How folks will talk! Why, they'd got black wife and bairns quite pat at Saturday's market-table, I was told."

It was decided that Pennie should ride her own pony over to Mayfield, and after the early dinner which Mrs. Wynyard, in her diminished household, now shared with the children, she went immediately to equip. Pennie ought never to have been seen out of her riding-habit and hat. Her figure was so

shapely, firm, spirited, and well set-up in her saddle, that she looked better on horseback than many quite handsome women.

"Yon's something like riding," reflected her mother with pardonable pride, as Pennie took a gallop across the sward to the park-gate, while she steered the mare, always fidgety at starting, slowly down the avenue. On the high-road, Pennie reined in, and kept pace with the phaeton, chattering all the way, and delighting her mother.

It was a five-mile ride by a way that was beautiful all the year round. The road lay along the fell side, the narrow sinuous valley of the Esk below, and steep slopes of meadow and moorland above. The February sun shone high and clear in the pale blue sky, and the tiny becks, full-flooded with melting snows, rushed singing and laughing over their pebbly-beds.

"It feels almost like spring," said Pennie, snuffing up the aromatic scent of the fir-wood near Rood Abbey; of which was left only a gateway, and a few arches built into the wall of a long, low, retired house, with a neglected garden running down to the river. The owner was just issuing forth as they

passed; a gentleman of middle stature and dark visage, who recognized Mrs. Croft with a friendly touch of his hat, took a rapid survey of the figure on horseback, and passed on smiling to himself. Pennie asked who he was.

"Mr. Tindal, my landlord and your uncle Lister's. He's in a hurry to-day, it seems, unless you've frightened him, Pennie," replied her mother. "He has been touring it for five or six years, poor fellow, and now he's come home to live. It is a pretty place in summer-time, is Rood Abbey, but it is let go to waste shameful."

Another half mile or so brought them to Mayfield, with its familiar trimmed yews over-topping the wall, which screened the garden from the road; and the old door for those to enter at, who had no business at the farmyard beyond. Pennie passed it, telling her mother she would come in by the other way, and rode on to the stables where an old lame man welcomed her with an assurance that she looked as fresh as paint, and he hoped he see'd her well.

"I'm thriving, thank ye, Jacob, and how's your-

self?" said Pennie, who slipped now and then into the native idiom.

"I frames to get about, but I'se racked wi' rheumatiz terrible—*terrible*."

Pennie dropt lightly from her saddle, gathered her skirt over her arm, and glancing round at the busy hens pecking between the stones, at the cows crowding to the fold-yard gate, at a team of tired plough-horses going down to water at the pond, made her way to the back-door, and into the glowing kitchen whither her mother had preceded her.

"Home's home be it ever so homely, Pennie, isn't it, now?" said the widow, warmly.

"Yes, mother, it is." No mistake about Pennie's sense of satisfaction. She was at her ease at Mayfield, and happy.

It was a substantial house with double doors and no draughts; crooked stairs in a corner, carpeted with red, a square hall, tile-paved, long, low, sunny rooms, with broad windows, cushioned seats, and little panes; solid old furniture kept at a wonderful polish, and in the best parlour, pretty pale chintz curtains and covers, chosen in deference to Pennie's wishes;

a piano, and a book-case with glass-doors. Mrs. Croft preferred the stuffy crimson comfort of the little dining-room, where she and her husband had always sat, except on Sunday afternoons, when they dozed in state over good books in the best parlour, to keep it aired. But during Pennie's visits, the best parlour was opened for daily use, and as she went upstairs to the cleanest and sweetest of white dimity bed-rooms, she saw the gleam of the fire through the door ajar, and felt how nice it was, for a change, to be more made of than anybody.

The first evening was not to get over without a visitor. Pennie had come downstairs, had ensconced herself before the fire in a chair, especially dedicated to her service, and was cosily contemplating the red play of the flames in the half light, and listening to her mother's voice in high debate with Bessie, when the garden door banged, somebody tapped at the window in passing, and Mr. Richard Lister marched in—a very loud young man, of whom the whole house became aware the instant he entered it. "There is no need to ask if that is Dick," said Mrs. Croft, bustling into the hall. "You are come to stay?"

"I'll have my tea, aunt. Nothing would serve my mother but I must walk over, and see if you had brought Pennie."

"Yes, she's there in the best parlour. Pennie love, here's your cousin Dick."

Pennie rose and presented her small paw, which the young giant clapt between his two big ones sonorously:—

"What a mite it is; she doesn't grow a bit," said he, and chucked her under the chin, and bade her look taller.

Poor Pennie hardly knew whether to laugh or to be angry, and while she was making up her mind, Dick pulled a chair close along side of hers, and took possession of her in a masterful, manly sort of way that there was no getting rid of without being disagreeable. Dick knew he was doing the cousinly to admiration (as the cousinly was done in those parts), and if Pennie had given herself airs of dignity, he would only have teased her. She had wisdom enough to understand that, and after a momentary qualm, to take his assiduities in good part. He helped her at tea to the daintiest messes, he made

her play, and tried to make her sing for him; he asked if she could sew worsted work, and promised to ride with her to the meet of the hounds; and before he took himself away, he insisted on a pledge that she would dance the first dance with him whenever the party that was to be at Rood, came off.

"It is to be some day early next week, that's all I know. But you'll come to-morrow, and see my mother. Good-night, aunt, good-night, cousin Pennie. *That's* to be all, is it?" and touching her fingers delicately, he made her a formal bow, and walked with a mock majestic air into the hall.

"Did cousin Dick expect me to give him a kiss, mother?" asked Pennie, affronted, when he was gone.

"I daresay he did, love; it's Dick's way. The gels at home spoil him. But never you heed his nonsense."

Rood Grange lay in the fields about a quarter of a mile wide of the abbey. It was within a moderate walk of Mayfield, but Pennie rode and her mother drove, as on the day before, it being Mrs. Croft's intention, after showing her daughter at her brother's

house, to go round by Beckby to visit Mrs. Jones. Pennie felt a shy reluctance to encounter again the boisterous courtesies of her cousin Dick, but she braced up her mind to bear them with complacency rather than vex her mother, or make any of her kinsfolk think she was "above them"—a tendency which she had seen and suffered from on former occasions. It could therefore be no disappointment when they got to the Grange to hear that Dick was gone to Norminster with his father, and that only aunt Lister and the girls were at home, with a fire in their best parlour in expectation of the visit.

Mrs. Lister was a tall, handsome woman of six or seven and forty, rather austere in her notions, and very proud of her family, whose gravestones for three hundred years back were to be seen in Eskdale churchyard. Her daughters, Joanna and Lucy, were shorter and homelier; without their mother's beauty, but not without her pride. They kissed Pennie, and sat formally down again in their chairs, and looked her over while *their* mother and *her* mother talked about her in the frankest way.

"She is the moral of Croft, the very moral of

her father, she is," said her aunt, considering her visage critically. "But never mind, Pennie, beauty's but skin deep, and handsome is that handsome does."

"I don't care for being ugly; I never think of it unless I am reminded," replied Pennie quickly.

"Aunt Lister didn't mean to remind you of it, Pennie love; she's better manners," said her mother, patting her arm.

"I don't know what sort of manners Miss Pennie's used to among th' Wynyards an' Huttons, an' Raymonds, but I dessay they're much t' same as our own," rejoined Mrs. Lister, who was piqued at the allusion to her manners. "My fam'ly's as good as theirs. Dobbies was in Eskdale before any of 'em."

The challenge was not taken up. Everybody who was neighbour to Rood knew Mrs. Lister's pet theme, and avoided it as judicious people always do avoid a crotchet and a bore. Joanna turned the conversation adroitly by asking her mother if she did not think Pennie's habit a lovely fit. Joanna wanted a new habit herself.

"Yes, it sets very nice to the figure: I dessay it's London cut." Mrs. Lister was not mollified in a moment.

"No, it was made by Robinson, the tailor at Norminster," said Pennie.

"Then, mother, I'll have mine made at Robinson's," cried Joanna. Joanna was rather high in the shoulder, and flat in the waist, but nobody suggested that there was something in the figure as well as in the tailor, because nobody present felt envious of her, or wanted to inflict a mortification on either mother or daughter.

Mrs. Lister's feelings towards Pennie were complex. She thought her as ordinary a little body as ever stept, and yet she felt jealous of her. She was aware that her sister-in-law had in her mind that project about her handsome son, and she was ready to forward it by every means in her power, and to hate Pennie, if Dick married her, with a teasing querulous hatred such as women never indulge in except to their sons' wives. Pennie was sensible of her aunt's contemptuous antipathy, which dated from several years ago, probably from the day when

Jonathan Croft's will was read, and that public slight of omission put upon his wife's family which Lister of Rood had never forgiven, and which his helpmeet had adopted as a reflection on the Dobbies also. But she was a Christian woman who knew her duty as a connection, a relative, and a neighbour, and who plumed herself on fulfilling it in every contingency. She therefore now stated her hospitable intentions of giving Pennie a party, and said Thursday in next week would suit her if it would suit her sister Crofts. The widow was gratified and showed it.

"A party at Rood, Pennie; what do you think of that? Rood's famous for parties and suppers; but it's the games and dancing you young 'uns cares for. Eh, Joanna?" Joanna laughed, and Pennie said it would be very nice.

At mention of the games even Lucy, who was of a sluggish temperament, grew animated. "We want mother to ask Mr. Tindal, but she says it wouldn't do. I wonder why it wouldn't do?" cried she noisily.

"He is as free-spoken as can be," added Joanna; "and I dessay he'd like to come. People is not so

stiff as we are that has lived in France; and I'm sure he must find it dull enough at home."

Mrs. Lister looked annoyed. "Mr. Tindal makes himself very friendly, talking to the gels, but he's laughing at 'em half the time. I sha'n't ask him any more than I shall ask young Squire Raymond. It is the same thing exac'ly. Let folks keep to their own kind. There's more sociability and comfort without any of your grandees. No offence to you, Pennie, you didn't choose where you'd go live."

"They've not spoilt her, if they have made a lady of her," said Mrs. Croft, who did not want for spirit.

"I'm not saying they have. But about Mr. Tindal, gels, your father wouldn't allow of it, if I would; and there's things we needn't talk on besides, and so let it rest. You'll have *beaux* in plenty without him." Lucy relapsed into silence, aware that it was useless to dispute when her mother had spoken; and Mrs. Croft reminded Pennie that it was time they were going on to Beckby.

Pennie was glad to be in her saddle again; the social atmosphere at Rood was not pleasant that

afternoon; it would have been pleasanter had Dick been there. The visit to Beckby was more of a success. Mrs. Jones was hearty and jovial. She was all things to all men, and all women too. She declared Pennie was as tall as her cousin Joanna, and of a deal smarter make; she admired her pony, her hat, her whip, the way she did up her curly hair, her habit, and even her boots. "A neat foot and ankle is my weakness," said she. "I was one gel brought up with five brothers, Miss Pennie, and I look always at a woman from a man's point of view."

"And I think that's the best and the kindest," replied Pennie laughing; and she told her mother afterwards that she liked that fat Mrs. Jones who did not make a stranger of her, much better than her Aunt Lister.

Mrs. Croft was one of those robust women who place enjoyment in activity. When she was alone at Mayfield she minded her farm, her flocks and herds, her kitchen, dairy, and poultry-yard; but when Pennie was with her, she felt a necessity for doing a great deal more. Every day was dull and wasted in

which some excursion had not been taken or some visit paid. The weather continued bright and open, and favoured her roving propensity. Pennie was carried to see friends who were not seen once a year, kinsfolk who lived ten, twelve, fourteen miles off; and one afternoon even up into bleak, wild, barren Arkindale, where the clergyman's wife was her mother's second cousin.

A little church, shingle-roofed, with a square tower, stood side by side with a little house, also shingle-roofed, about which there was not a tree or a bush,—only a wall with a narrow border under it, and a grass-plot with a paved path running up from the gate to the porch. A cluster of cottages hung on the hill-side, five hundred yards or so to the left, and some distance beyond them again, over a sharp ridge, rose a faint cloud of smoke, which came from the smelting-works at the lead mines. It was a sunny day, and the bare expanse of fell did not look so very dreary as Pennie had been told it was.

The Rev. James Burton, in an old coat, with the collar turned up to protect his ears, and a black felt wideawake pressed down on his head to meet it, was

digging in a patch of kitchen-garden at the windy east end of his house, and putting in early peas—too early, Mrs. Croft warned him. He was a young man, with abundance of rough energy, and his wife was like unto him. The visitors found her rocking her baby's cradle with her foot, and making new flannel shirts for her husband with her fingers. She was nice and bright looking, in radiant health, and possessed of an equable temper. The baby was a chubby specimen, worthy of its parents.

"We get on here capitally," said the wife, eager to give a good account of herself. "*Dull!* We have never been dull yet! You can't think how beautiful the fell was in the snow. And last autumn, when the moors were in bloom—oh, I cannot describe them! I used to carry baby and my work out of doors, and stay for hours in the sun. The parish is scattered? Yes; there are some of the people up at Dale-head, and one or two families right over the hill. But only think if James had gone to Rupert's Land, as he used to talk. Why then I suppose he might have had to travel a hundred miles over the snow when he wanted letters from home. I am sure

when Mr. Wynyard offered him this little living, we were as happy as happy could be. What was the good of waiting till we lost heart? He is content, and so am I. Everything is cheap, and coals are a mere nothing—*lucky*, when we burn so many."

"It is a real pleasure to see you take to your lot so kindly, Elizabeth. Some young women would feel here as if they was quite cut off from the world. But you never was one that cared much for company. Pennie has a fancy to see the works; can Mr. Burton spare time, do you think, to walk down with her?"

Elizabeth was sure he could, and summoned him by a tap at the window to receive Pennie into his charge.

When Pennie saw Arkindale that winter afternoon, it looked in its main features much as it must have looked for hundreds of years; but the mining village was recent. Ten summers ago, a wandering archæologist had discovered some traces of an ancient encampment, which, taken in connection with the metallic indications in the hills, and the military road that ran near, led him to believe that there had

been a great Roman mining station in the valley once. The old pits in Colsterdale, which had been worked for three centuries at least, if not for more, had been long failing, and Mr. Hargrove caught at the learned stranger's story, as at a new lease of fortune; carried it to Mr. Wynyard, and succeeded in infecting him with his own sanguine expectations. A colony of miners was transplanted from Colsterdale, a hive of cottages, thatched with heather, grew up, and the works, built on an extensive scale, were set a-going—thus far only to their proprietor's loss.

Mr. Burton made Pennie observe how neatly the village had been planned, and how it lay so that the smoke from the tower-like chimney of the furnace blew away from it except in one rare quarter of the wind. A hundred or more acres of cultivated soil had been rescued from the moor about it, which were divided into portions belonging one to each dwelling. Altogether it had the aspect of a place that had started hopefully, that was very, very poor, but not yet despairing. The cottage doors were shut that winter day; but school was just loosing, and some thirty boys and girls, ruddy and stout enough, came

rushing noisily out of a building which served every public purpose in the parish. The master, a hard-featured man, with a humorous eye, followed, accompanied by his wife, carrying a large piece of needlework over her arm, and her thimble still on her finger.

"It is four o'clock; we must make haste, or the smelting-house will be closed," said Mr. Burton, with a pleasant recognition of his parish helpers as he passed. Pennie quickened her pace, and in ten minutes more they were at the works. From platform to platform, where the bruised ore was washed till it was almost pure dust of lead, they descended, and looked into a vault where a vast water-wheel was whirling with incessant mighty creak and splash. In the smelting-house, bare-armed men, swart and sweaty, were piling lumps of glowing coal on the furnace, from beneath which the molten lead ran into its reservoir. A mould stood by, into which one Vulcan ladled the fluid metal like broth, while another, with two pieces of wood, skimmed off the scum and ashes. Pennie was glad to escape out of the intense heat and roaring blast, and to look from

a distance at the gallows-like apparatus erected over the shafts of the mines, where the men went down fathoms and fathoms deep into the bowels of the earth, and in darkness and danger toiled six hours daily at hewing the slender vein of ore, for a wage and a tribute small in proportion to its small produce.

Dixon, the foreman of the works, was in his dingy little office; himself a dingy little man, who had not much satisfaction in his life. The incumbent entered with Pennie, and asked him what news. "None, sir; none at all. We're labouring away at Vain Hope yet. But master says, 'Keep on; keep on,' and so, I suppose we shall keep on until he bids hold. Look here, sir, what's this—gowld?" He brought out of his desk a physic bottle full of water, in which, as he placed it against his dark coat sleeve, Pennie saw a few bright yellow sparks of metal.

"It is gold, sure enough," replied Mr. Burton.

"Eh, they declared it was. Job Ryder washed it out yesterday. Master 'll be ranty again. We once afore got as much gowld as was worth a pound or two, and you'd have thought we'd found a

Californy to hear him talk. The missis and babby well, sir? I say now we have got you and her, sir, we only want a bit better luck here to be a flourishing community; but better luck don't seem like to come."

Mr. Burton did not deliver himself of any oracular hopeful predictions. He had said to Mr. Hargrove more than once, that he thought the sooner the mine was closed, the less loss there would be to all concerned in it.

When Pennie and the incumbent reached his house again, they found Mrs. Croft impatiently looking out for them, and the pony and phaeton at the gate. Good-byes were exchanged in haste, and away the visitors went at speed. "Only daylight last until we're down Gallows Hill, and I don't care," said the widow. "I never like passing that, nor yet Pedlar's Bones, after dark."

It was then five o'clock and glooming fast; but by keeping at a brisk trot for the next half hour, the peril at Pedlar's Bones was escaped—the said peril being a ghost popularly believed to haunt a spot on the moor where fifty years ago a pedlar, who had

been missing through a long and terrible winter, was found "in his bones only," and with his pack beside him. The other and more real peril at Gallows Hill, a steep, straight descent, which the rain kept washed down to its stony foundations, was also passed in safety, and Mayfield was reached soon after seven; but not until it was so dark that Jacob declared he was just thinking of setting out with a lantern in search of them.

IV.

A PARTY AT ROOD GRANGE.

If anybody could have wandered invisible about the kitchen-offices at Rood Grange on the two or three days preceding Mrs. Lister's party, they would have witnessed a stir of preparation that promised well for the event. Whatever could be accomplished in the way of things good to eat, with unlimited supplies at command, Mrs. Lister and her daughters manufactured. Custards, creams, cakes, puffs, pies, pasties, chickens roast and chickens boiled, with rich white sauce frozen over their plump breasts, ham, tongue, spiced beef, lamb, salad; queer knick-knackeries, sweet and savoury, very delicious, of which the Dobbies kept the receipts a secret and a heirloom. A large order had been sent to the confectioner at Norminster for fruits, dried and

iced, crackers and other bon-bons; and Mr. Lister, on the morning of the great day, brought up from the crypt under the Grange a regiment of cobwebby bottles, than which, he said, Wynyard of Eastwold, he was sure, had none older nor better in his cellar. The fine linen, the dainty china, the glittering glass, the old silver that belonged to the house, and the silver that intimate friends had lent for the occasion, had all been seen to by the mistress's own eye, and when the afternoon began to draw in, she and her girls could retire upstairs to dress for the evening, without any fidgety anxiety as to how it would go off.

"When there is plenty to eat and plenty to drink, a clean swept floor and a fiddle, I'm not afraid of folks going away discontented, whether they be young or old," said the hostess as her final orders were given, and her final survey made. "And now, gels, you'd best make haste, and put on your white frocks to be ready when they come; Mrs. Jones is always early."

Rood Grange had a hospitable heart, and was never in better humour than when entertaining its

friends. Every guest-chamber was prepared—for a party at the Listers' meant to several staying all night. The best parlour had been festively adorned with bowls of moss, crocuses, and snow-drops, and two card-tables set out for those ancients who would not do more than peep now and then into the room where the dance was to be—a long room with white-washed walls and raftered roof, about which Dick and a carpenter had made green boughs do tapestry right handsomely. Benches borrowed from the school-house were ranged along the walls, and a kitchen table, with three chairs on it, was to serve as orchestra. Already, before it was dark, the two fiddles, one blind and the other lame, had arrived, and had partaken of refreshment. A cornet had been engaged also, but did not come until well on in the night, when he was announced by the master of the ceremonies as *slewed*, and incapable of performance. There was a long stone passage, not well lighted, from the hall down to the dancing-room, which had capabilities as a promenade, and as a place for sitting out in the cool. Joanna saw for herself that a seat was placed there.

The girls had the best parlour to themselves for ten minutes after they were attired,—an interval they spent complacently in admiring each other, and in wondering how their young friends and especially how their cousin Pennie would be dressed. Poor Pennie! she was dressed a great deal too much, as she uneasily assured her mother. She had brought nothing from Eastwold but warm woollen dresses; she never considered, nor did her mother think to ask, what she was going to wear until the morning, when the widow's dismay was painful to hear and see, as the facts dawned upon her. Pennie suggested that she must wear her Sunday blue merino.

"Nay, Pennie, you shall go fit to be seen, or you shall not go at all!" cried her mother. "I should never hear the last of it from your Aunt Lister, if I took you to her party in a high stuff frock. Joanna and Lucy will be dressed out like May-day—artificials in their heads as like as not. Bessie, Bessie," calling impetuously from the top of the stairs. Bessie came running up, wiping the soap-suds from her arms. "Never heed your arms, my lass, but find Ned, and tell him to saddle old Darby this minute,

to go to Eastwold with a note from Miss Penelope, and wait for an answer." Bessie rushed away. "Now, Pennie love, you write off to Mrs. Wynyard or nurse to send you a white frock—that you wore to Norminster Ball. Let us have you smart."

"It is silk and crape with bunches of lilies about it, mother," remonstrated Pennie.

"All the prettier. I choose to have my little gel as nice as other folks' little gels. Is there anything for your hair?"

"Yes, there is a wreath to correspond."

"Then tell 'em to send that too, and all the other trinkum-trankums you wore."

The note was ruefully written and despatched, and about four o'clock of the afternoon, arrived Ned back again, with a light deal box containing Pennie's finery. Mrs. Wynyard had caused a simple spotted muslin to be sent with the gayer dress, but Mrs. Croft would not hear of its being worn instead; and about half-past six, when the best parlour at Rood was beginning to get full and hot, behold poor Pennie enter, on her mother's proud ruby satinette arm, her curly brown hair surmounted by a garland

of lilies and leaves, crisp, rustling, airy skirts, white satin shoes, white gloves, gold necklet, gold bracelets, feathery fan, and all complete.

"What a picter!" ejaculated Mrs. Jones, who was sitting near the door.

"Eh, Cousin Pennie, you look like a bit o' froth! we must mind, and not blow you away," roared Dick.

Mr. Wynyard's ward, Mrs. Croft's rich daughter, would have been an object of interest to the present company whatever she might have been pleased to put on, but in her elegant out-of-place costume, she was an object of curiosity as well, and of admiration to not a few. Her Uncle Lister, who had not yet seen her, came forward and kissed her sonorously, and her cousins whispered, "Wasn't she laid out! but how brown her skin showed against all that white silk and puffy crape!" It was a great comfort that her skin was brown under the circumstances. Pennie was sensible of forty pairs of eyes settling upon her all at once, but after a momentary spasm of shyness, the absurdity of her feelings and her situation struck her so keenly that she laughed up in Dick's face with a merry confidence that amazed him.

"You are a wick'un, Cousin Pennie, I see what you are," said he, and came to a full stop in his obtrusive assiduities. He fancied she was making fun of him, and Dick did not quite understand it. She was not half so nice as Jessie Briggs, he thought, staring across the crowded room in search of a couple of bright hazel eyes, whose every glance he felt was a compliment and a caress. But the bright hazel eyes were engaged at the moment in scrutinizing Pennie, and did not respond to his gaze. Their owner had a face white as milk and red as roses, hair more tawny than auburn, a plump neck and arms, and dimples in cheek, chin, shoulders, elbows and hands—she was all dimples and softness, and lazy, sunny, good-humoured vanity.

There was soon a movement towards tea, and Dick, as he had been ordered, led off Pennie, not without a glance over his shoulder to see who was so lucky as to be mated with Jessie. It was his friend, Mr. Tom Boothby, and he was gratified to observe that she did not seem over well pleased. Dick remained standing until they had crushed in at the dining-room door, when he signed to Tom to bring his

partner round opposite to him. He then took his own seat with resignation beside Pennie, muttering, "That will do."

His mother observed the arrangement over the tea-urn, so also did Mrs. Croft, and both disapproved. Jessie was the *belle* of Eskdale, but she was one amongst so many children that she was not likely to have a penny to her fortune, nor was her family of old enough standing to match with either Dobbies or Listers. Dick had been "sweet on her" for a year or two, but his own people were very discouraging, and had looked to the advent of Pennie and her money-bags as the time to make a breach and a fresh start. And only see how badly he was beginning! Pennie formed a swift and shrewd estimate of the case, and made herself very pleasant in whispers.

"Dick, give me some preserved apricots, and tell me who that is opposite with the pretty bush of waved hair."

"Jessie, here's my cousin Pennie asking after you," said Dick, across the table. There was such a clatter and chatter all round it now that any communication was safe.

Jessie smiled and nodded. "I'm proud to know your cousin, Mr. Richard: it's the first time we've met." Pennie smiled and nodded also, but what she replied was lost in the roar of a stout young yeoman on her left, who had a noisy habit of opening his mouth with a guffaw whenever he spoke.

"I'm afraid your lungs is bad, Gaskill; you should talk to Doctor," said Dick, drily.

"Who's to talk to Doctor?" inquired that busy parish personage who had arrived late in top-boots, and announced that he couldn't stay over an hour. "Is it Gaskill? I have been advising him to go to *Mydeary* this ever so long. Try you at persuading him, Miss Joanna."

"Nay, I'll have nothing to do with persuading anybody, not I," responded the damsel.

The scrape of a fiddle had made itself heard each time the door opened to admit a fresh relay of hot buttered cakes, and signs of impatience began at length to manifest themselves amongst the young people. Dick looked at his mother entreatingly, twice or thrice before she said: "Yes, be off with you!" when immediately chairs were pushed back,

and all who meant to dance crowded out into the hall, and down the dim passage to the long room, where a multitude of little oil lamps, dexterously fixed amongst the evergreens, made it quite brilliant with light.

"How pretty!" "Well, I declare, and it is the cheese-room!" "What a nice floor!" As these exclamations flew about, one or two couples took an impromptu galop to try it.

"What are we to have first?" cried somebody.

"Sir Roger de Coverley, of course!" cried another somebody—an old bachelor in a green coat and gilt buttons, a dandy in his day, who had never been able to make up his mind whom to marry, and was now reduced to a wig, and to playing master of the ceremonies, where a generation ago he had played general admirer and heart-breaker. Bobby Clough was his name, and his vanity was as exacting and invincible now that he was "poor old Bobby" as it had been when he was "Bobby the Beau."

"I must take care and not put my hoof through your smart frock, Cousin Pennie," said Dick, as he whirled her to her place at the top of the set.

"Never mind my frock, but let me enjoy myself. It is such fun!" replied she.

Fun it was, much louder and less restrained than the fun at Brackenfield; and quite a novelty too. What voices had the young men! what voices too the girls—even Jessie. There was not much trace of the dancing-master about any of them. They were accurate in the figures, but what high capers some of the *beaux* did cut! Young Gaskill, for instance, though his weight could have been nothing short of sixteen stone, was light and buoyant as a feather on his toes; and Tom Boothby performed with as much agility and precision as a clown at a country circus, showing off the ancient style of dancing against the modern lounge and wriggle.

While Sir Roger was in full career, Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Jones came to look on and admire. "How bonny that Jessie is," whispered the widow to her friend. "Dick's smitten awful—anybody can see it."

"They'll never be let put up *their* horses together. Her mother was in service, and she's got no money. Dobbies is all for money."

Bobby Clough sidled up to them. "You'll take

a turn presently, ladies, I dessay. I mean to cut in myself. Sound of a fiddle to me is like sound of a horn to my blind old horse in the paddock, that has carried me through many a long day's run with the Berrythorpe hounds."

"You're as young as ever you was, Mr. Clough. Nobody wears like you. I was saying so only yesterday to Jones, who complains sadly of his rheumaticks, the ill-naturedest pain that is."

"Jones is a lucky fellow that has a good nuss to see after him," said the bachelor with a significant sigh.

"And whose fault is it, you hav'n't a good nuss to see after *you*, Mr. Clough?" asked the widow. Bobby cast a sheepish look at her—but for that shabby will of Croft's he didn't know *what* might have happened.

A loud clapping of hands apprised the orchestra when to change the tune, and three sets of dancers were next formed, in one of which Pennie figured away with Mr. Tom Boothby.

"Your little gel has a sperrity air with her, Mrs. Croft," observed her friend. "Tom Boothby's fortun'et in his partner. It isn't many knows the

Lancers right through. Tom's steady now—he'll be good for nothing after supper. Pity it is, to be sure, that he's getting so fond of his glass."

"A beautiful voice leads a man direct in the way of drink," said Bobbie Clough. "What a song Tom sings. I'd rather by half listen to him than to any of your sky-high quaverers at London Christmas concerts and Canterbury 'alls. It is a real pleasure to hear Tom. Is your daughter anything of a' *amatour*—of a musicianer, Mrs. Croft?"

"She plays the pianer, Mr. Clough, but she don't sing."

After the Lancers, Pennie came and sat down by her mother for a minute, when Bobby Clough instantly improved his opportunity, and with an old-fashioned bow hoped he might have the honour of a set with her. "Very happy," said Pennie, beaming at him. "Let it be a quadrille."

"The conceited old fellow, to ask *her*!" ejaculated Mrs. Jones, as Bobby handed his partner off.

"Edinburgh Quadrilles," cried he to the orchestra. "Tune up. Gaskill, will you be our *vis-à-vis* with Miss Joanna?"

Three more sets were formed in a trice. "Pennie's very good tempered," said her mother; "she don't much heed who she stands up with yet. Who is Dick going to dance with?—Jessie again. I'll go and take a hand at whist, now, Mrs. Jones. I dessay you'll be for coming too."

The two matrons went off in company, and when Pennie had concluded her set with the old beau, she perceived that her mother's place had been taken by her Aunt Lister, who was holding conversation with no less a person than Mr. Hargrove. Lawyer Hargrove was a favourite at Rood—"so much the gentleman," the girls said he was. Pennie for her part never liked him, and she responded to his respectful, "How d' ye do, Miss Croft?" with a distant courtesy that made her aunt feel she had not been bred amongst gentlefolks for nothing. Mr. Hargrove said not another word, but he kept his eye on her as she went revolving about the room with her Cousin Dick in the mazes of the Sarabande, which still survived here, a pretty and fashionable dance, long after it had ceased to be the *mode* in more dignified circles. Mrs. Lister called Pennie to

her when it was finished, and bade her rest a turn, for she seemed heated. Lucy, with her face flushed and hair flying, followed her to suggest that a game should come next.

"Lady's Toilet," she whispered.

"Mr. Hargrove grinned: "And *forfeits*, Miss Lucy?"

"What is a game good for without forfeits?" retorted Lucy. "Will you play, sir? Will you play, Cousin Pennie?"

Pennie said she would rather not, but such an amazed remonstrance began, that she stopt it at once by consenting to anything, and promptly taking her place in the circle. Lucy provided a wooden trencher, and handed it to Dick to spin first, while everybody was fixing on his or her article of dress to be called by. "I'll be fan," and "I'll be slipper," "I'll be comb, glove, sash," and so forth; and when all were settled and seated, swift went the trencher, while Dick sang out, "My lady calls, my lady calls—what shall I say my lady calls for, Cousin Pennie? her *Petticoat!*" But before the ponderous Gaskill, who had adopted that garment, could jump up and

catch the trencher, it had twirled its twirl out, and hummed down flat on the floor.

"A forfeit, a forfeit!" cried Joanna, and then giggled, blushed, and hid her face for a moment by turning to whisper to her neighbour.

Gaskill, poor heavy wight, gave up his pipe-stopper, and then did his *devoir* in the game, giving the trencher a strong impetus and roaring for his lady's *hat*, when in dashed Pennie, seized the tee-totum in mid-career, sent it off anew, and screamed for her lady's *slipper*. This brought pretty Jessie out of her corner, but not quickly enough to escape a forfeit. She gave a blue bow from her dress, and looking round with a sweet helplessness, said,—"I don't know what anybody is. What are you, Mr. Richard?"

"He is Green Garters," said a very tall, lean-visaged young man, all in black, and with black lank hair.

Jessie spun the trencher, and called for *green garters*. Everybody tittered and nobody stirred. "He's playing you a trick, Jessie. None of us is called that," said Lucy. "Spin it again and cry, *feather*, or *fan*, or something."

"That's just like you, Timothy, but I'll be even with you some day," said Jessie, menacing the lean young man, with all her dimples. He wished she would, and as she set the trencher going again, and cried for her lady's *fan*, Lucy herself rose, and cleverly contrived to knock it flat in attempting to catch it.

"That is a forfeit, Miss Lucy," said Lawyer Hargrove.

"I know it is," returned she, and threw her handkerchief on the heap with an air.

And so the game went on for half-an-hour or more, when Bobby Clough suggested that the forfeits must be redeemed, or there would not be time enough to make an end before supper. The forfeits were redeemed accordingly, not without a vast amount of noise and laughter. Bobby Clough himself, with his eyes bound, was oracle. "Here is a thing, and a very pretty thing, what shall be done with this pretty thing?" demanded Dick, dangling the blue bow openly, and whispering aside to Bobby, "It is Jessie's?" Jessie was bidden to whistle a stave from Garryowen, which, as she

could not, was compromised by a tribute to Dick. Pennie had nothing to pay for, so she escaped from the shrill clamour into the parlour to hear Tom Boothby sing. Ah! how he sang! a rich, mellow, pathetic troll that made hearts throb and eyes fill. when he, and that most unpromising lean, black young man, who was really the doctor's assistant, joined with Gaskill and the host in a merry *catch*, which made the eyes run over with laughter, and before sides had ceased aching after that, there was a cry raised, "Come to supper."

The supper was Mrs. Lister's triumphant hour of the night.

"You mustn't expect to see anything as grand as this at Beckby, Miss Pennie," Mrs. Jones warned her.

Pennie was sure, in return, that Beckby would be very pleasant.

If there had been hitherto any silent tongues amongst the guests, they must now surely have been all unloosed; for the hum and roar were continuous, with a running fire of crackers amongst the young people. It was not until the supper was half over

that Mrs. Lister was sufficiently disengaged from her hospitable cares to notice how hers were placed; and then she saw that Dick had paired with Jessie, Joanna with Gaskill, Lucy with the lawyer, and Pennie—Pennie, for whom the party was given—with the doctor's assistant! She seemed to be capitally entertained too, for her quaint little phiz was all one laugh, and the lean, black-a-vised medico never ceased talking, except to hear her response. Buckhurst was a notorious wag, and at this moment he was imposing on Pennie's credulity tremendously, with an anecdote of how, when he was in Australia (where he had never been) with Dr. Scoresby (whom he had never seen), they had, on a very frosty day, a hand-to-hand fight with a wild cat, as big as a mastiff, whose coat was so electrical that when they struck at her it gave out sparks that set his hair on fire.

"I should have expected it to grow crisp and frizzy ever after," said Pennie, with demure insinuation.

"So would anybody who did not understand the philosophy of the thing," replied he, in a confident

tone. "Did you ever hear of the man in America that the alligator played Jonah with? No; then you don't read your newspaper. It is too long a story to tell you now, but remind me of it the next time we sit together at supper."

There was more dancing afterwards, until two or three o'clock in the morning, when the company was visibly thinning, and the blind fiddler had fallen asleep. Soon after two, Mrs. Croft asked Pennie what she thought about going home. Pennie was quite ready, and Dick, again prompted by his mother, helped her to wrap up, and was as coaxing and teasing with her as he might have been with Jessie.

"Dick, I shall like you as well if you'll behave to me as you do to your sisters," said she, dispensing gently with some of his attentions. "We should be better friends, I know."

"What a little odd thing you are, Pennie. *They* give me a kiss at good-night, so it is only fair. "Yes, she's coming, Aunt Croft! I shall see you safe into the phaeton."

There was a fine moon, and no wind, and the short drive home was not disagreeable. "You

enjoyed yourself, Pennie, love?" inquired her mother. "Dick is the best-natured fellow that ever was, but he tries to please too many."

"I should cleave to Jessie, were I in his shoes," responded Pennie.

"You don't know what's what. There's a many things belongs to all things in this world. When folks marries it is mostly for life."

"And so it ought to be for love. That is my view, mother."

V.

AN UNINVITED GUEST.

Pennie had been three weeks at Mayfield. The party at Beckby was over, and so also was Mrs. Croft's return entertainment. Pennie had seen her kinsfolk in the familiarity of their homes, had made acquaintance with her mother's friends, and had left a kindly impression on nearly all. And what impression had they left on her?

It was growing dusk in the parlour. Mrs. Croft had gone out by herself for a gossip, Pennie did not know where, and she was alone. She had ensconced herself in the window-seat with an old novel from the bookcase, written in letters, but the story had not proved interesting, and was now thrown aside. The garden trees shook tempestuously in the wild March afternoon, and ever and anon a blast of sleet whirled

across the panes, foretelling of snow. Pennie had on her pathetic face. She was thinking—"I hope I am not unnatural, but I could *not* lead this life always. If I had never left them I should be happy enough amongst them. I should feel as they feel, and think as they think, but now I *cannot*. How tired I get of their talk—beaux and butter, money and mice, markets and marrying, and lambing! Bessie in the kitchen is better off than I should be here, for I have no interest in anything. Dear mother, how good and kind she is! It would weary her to live my life as much as it wearies me to live hers. She would not know how to get through the day without her farm and her farming friends. No, I must stay at Eastwold; and I can come over oftener now Miss Rosslyn has left. It is only a morning's ride after all. Yet it *must* be sad for her alone in these long winter days and nights."

So her mother had told her, suggesting that she should come home to Mayfield altogether. Pennie was in infinite perplexity and distress about it. She wanted to do what was right, and for a vexed moment she felt as if her mother ought not to have put her

on making such a sacrifice, nor yet on refusing to make it. For a sacrifice in a large sense it would assuredly be. Pennie had cultivated her intelligence, her taste, her fancy; she was not at all *fine*, but she liked the friction of good company, and would like it still better as she grew more mature in mind. At Mayfield she must either change her pursuits or be without one associate, one sympathizer in them. Her most frequent wish was, that she had never left home, but close upon it followed always a confession to herself that Eastwold suited her now better than home—Eastwold, with its faded refinements, its sorrows and many cares, suited her better than the rough jollity of her kinsfolk and her mother's friends. Distance lent enchantment to the view of Mayfield, as of other places; absence made Pennie's heart grow fonder of the old barnyard and the chickens. Since she saw them last, womanly sentiments had begun to bud in her, which were proving not of the native briar, but of the foreign graft. There had been a little aching sense of disappointment with her at odd moments ever since she came, and when her mother spoke of her staying on for

always, she only felt what an effort it had been sometimes to behave as she was expected to behave.

She was going over it all in her own mind to no profit when an event came to pass—an event of small importance as it seemed, but which had its great consequences nevertheless.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! Whatever's happened? the voice was Bessie's rushing to the back-door. Pennie was off the window-seat, and out of the room in a twinkling. "What's happened to you, sir?"

"Nothing worse than a sprained ankle, my girl. Let me come in, and sit down a minute." It was Mr. Tindal who spoke, as he limped with painful difficulty up the steps, supporting himself by the wall.

"Take my shoulder, sir,—lean on me. Kitchen is not redd up yet, it's only a step farther to best parlour, sir, and there's a sofy there. Miss Penelope, just run up to your mother's room, and bring down that old leg-rest that was your father's. It's in corner by clock." Pennie went and came quickly, and Mr. Tindal was accommodated as well as could be. He appeared to suffer acutely, for he held his

leg with both hands, and frowned under his hat tremendously.

"What is good for a sprain? I'm sure if I know!" ejaculated Bessie. "Do you know, Miss Penelope?" Pennie shook her head, and Mr. Tindal, looking at her, applied one hand to the removal of his hat.

"I bear pain very ill," said he, apologetically. So it appeared, for his face was grey to the lips. Pennie got him some brandy, and wished her mother would come home. Bessie proposed sending Ned off to Allan Bridge for the doctor. "I wish you would, and if he is out, let Buckhurst attend," added the patient. "Pray, don't stand, Miss Croft, or I shall feel less at my ease still." As Ned clattered out of the yard on Darby, Bessie returned to the parlour with candles; drew the curtains, stirred the fire, and said missis would not surely be long now. She then went out and shut the door, leaving Pennie to keep the accidental guest company.

Who could be sociable in the first agony of a sprain? Mr. Tindal rejected Pennie's potion, and sat glooming, now at his disabled limb, and then at the fire. "I shall not get back to Rood to-night.

Will that lad of yours think to tell them as he passes that I am here ?" he inquired presently.

Pennie knew little of Ned's ways, but arguing from one boy to another—from Francis, Geoffrey or Maurice, to him—she feared that he would not think to do anything sensible that he was not bidden to do. "But, you know, the doctor could leave a message as he returns," added she, "or if there is likely to be any anxiety about your absence, old Jacob shall go now—at once." Mr. Tindal said there was no need to trouble old Jacob, and then he relapsed into silence. Pennie remembered her cousin's panegyric on him, and thought he must be a very different person at different times.

He was a man of one or two and thirty, and had a fine sensible face, with a curve of healthy sarcasm about the lips; evidently not a man to be known in an hour's idle society, though he could be free and familiar enough on occasion to delight the fluttering souls of Lucy and Joanna. At this moment, though his features were contorted with pain, his countenance was one to inspire liking and confidence. Unconsciously he appealed to the kindness and forbearance

of strangers wherever he went, and Pennie's sentimental heart was peculiarly open to such an appeal. She wished the doctor would come, she wished her mother would come, but most ardently she wished she could do something for the sufferer herself.

Mrs. Croft was the first to arrive. "Oh, dear! that I should have been out, Mr. Tindal, and that a gel of mine should be so helpless as not to know what to do for a sprain!" was her cry. "Pennie, love, take my bonnet and gloves, and go to my cupboard, and, straight in front of you, you'll see a bottle labled.——"

"I'll wait for the doctor or Buckhurst, Mrs. Croft, thank ye," interposed her reluctant visitor, in alarm. "Perhaps it is more than a sprain. If my boot were only off—it will have to be cut. Ah, no, let it be—let it be!" he remonstrated, before the widow had touched his foot, and she was glad to leave him to himself. His extreme sensitiveness shook her nerves, and made Pennie run to ask Bessie if she thought the doctor would be long.

"No,—listen. That's him riding into t'yard now." Bessie went to open the door, and Pennie standing by

the kitchen fire, recognized the voice of Mr. Buckhurst entering with a joke. He turned in there first, put down his hat and whip, and chafing his hands for a brisk minute, nodded, and followed Bessie into the parlour.

In less than five minutes he was out again, in a cool hurry: "You'll have Mr. Tindal's company for a month to come. It is a broken leg—just above the ankle; a slip on a loose stone, and a fall," said he, and was gone.

Dr. Grey returned with his assistant, and Mr. Tindal's man, shortly. The limb was set, and by Mrs. Croft wept over. "Oh, how he bore it!" sobbed she, telling the story to her daughter and Bessie. "*Beautiful.* He's resting now, poor fellow. There goes your parlour, Pennie; he says he won't stir till he's well. Put supper in the dining-room, lass; the doctor and Buckhurst will be glad of something before they go. Mr. Tindal's man'll sit up with him, and I'll make his gruel myself. He's to get nothing else to-night. I've a true pity for him," added she to Pennie aside, "but I'd as lief he'd fallen before somebody else's door. There never was a man that ill-

luck dogged as it dogs him. One might fancy there was a curse upon him."

Mayfield hardly knew itself on the morrow. An uninvited guest (especially an uninvited male guest with a broken leg) upsets the routine of small households completely. Pennie had no dulness or inoccupation to complain of now. Her mother was obliged to make her useful in all manner of ways, and she complacently accepted the duties with which she was charged, to relieve others for service in the parlour. Dr. Grey congratulated her on getting into training for a farmer's wife, and promised to tell her cousin Dick what a clever, handy little body she was —compliments Pennie did not appreciate from her negligent co-trustee. Her leave of absence from Eastwold was extended, and she no longer felt any particular anxiety to return. She conceived a deep interest in the tenant of her pretty parlour, from which she was exiled for many days, while moans and groans of pain smote her with yearning and pity as she listened helpless at the door. The coming and going of the doctor, of the housekeeper at the Abbey, of Pierce, Mr. Tindal's man, and of other

persons to help, to hinder, or to inquire, created a perpetual bustle and variety. The first hour of rest in the daytime that Pennie enjoyed was one afternoon when her mother slipped out of the parlour to get a taste of fresh air in the garden (and of gossip with Mrs. Jones), when she was bidden to slip in, quietly sit her down, and, if Mr. Tindal asked for drink, to give it him, but not let him talk.

Pennie did as she was told with a great awe upon her. Mr. Tindal had been at death's-door; he was as weak as water yet, and it was much if he got better—so Bessie, and the strange nurse Dr. Grey had provided for him at the worst, had talked before her. Pennie had never been in the presence of any one hovering on the confines of the other world; and when she entered the parlour, she felt like going to church in Lent, when the pulpit was draped in black cloth, and the choir pitched all their tunes in a minor key. A low iron camp-bed had been set up between the window and the fire, and there lay the sick man, white, worn, pathetic, with shut, sunken eyes, and close-clipt hair. He was so still that she thought he slept, but presently he

muttered a wish to know what o'clock it was. Pennie drew a little nearer, and said it was half-past three. At the sound of a fresh voice he opened his eyes, looked at her, and then at the table, where stood a pitcher of refreshing drink, a glass, and a spoon. She interpreted the glance into a thirsty desire, poured some out, and offered it to his lips.

"Is Pierce here?" he asked. Pennie said he was not. "Nor your mother? Then try if you can raise my head a little, so that I can get a convenient sip." Pennie proposed the spoon. "That is right —you will soon learn." His face took on another expression altogether. "I feel that I have got a good turn at last," said he.

"Yes, but you must not talk," replied his new nurse, with decision. "If you do, you will fall off again."

"No, I shall not." This flat contradiction put to flight Pennie's awe, and she felt no more solemn than she had done when helping to wait on the Wynyard boys once, all three convalescent and fractious together after the measles. While she was still presiding in the parlour, her mother returned,

bringing in Dr. Grey, and, in reply to the usual inquiries, the patient said he thought he might enter on a course of amusement now.

"Is he off his head again? A course of amusement when he can't lift his hand to his mouth!" whispered the widow.

"Glad to see you in spirits, sir," said the doctor. "We will put Miss Penelope in charge of you again. She has stirred you up." Pennie remonstrated that *indeed* she had only told him what o'clock it was, and given him drink with a spoon. "It is all right, my dear, you shall give it him again. A bit of diversion with his tonics will help him on."

VI.

A THORN AND FLOWER PIECE.

Penelope was still at Mayfield when the blackthorn winter was over. Mr. Tindal was still there, too, but in a fair way, at last, towards recovery. He had made himself very much at home in Mrs. Croft's best parlour, like a man accustomed to frequent change of quarters. Its pretty pale chintz furniture was none the fresher for his seven weeks' occupancy, and none the sweeter for his convalescent pipes. He was not a docile patient, and the consequence had been a bad bout of fever, and a hospital nurse from Norminster, who frightened him into good behaviour, and brought him round. She was departed again now, and he was left to the tendance chiefly of Pennie, which also must shortly cease ; for the wedding at Brackenfield was drawing nigh, and she would

have to go. He really might have gone himself a week ago, and Dr. Grey had suggested a removal; but Mr. Tindal then began to profess a concern for the stability of his cure which he had not previously evinced, and the result was that he stayed on.

It was now mid-April, a sunny bright morning, and the parlour-window stood wide open to let in the air. Mr. Tindal lay recumbent on the sofa, a cigar between his lips, lazily watching the lazy motion of the smoke as he puffed it away. Pennie was gone into the garden to gather a few sweet violets, white and purple, to offer to her mother's guest—a morning gift that had regularly accompanied her morning inquiries since she had been admitted to do her part in waiting on him. He espied her in the distance, stooping over the violet beds, and raised himself a degree or two that he might command her movements, which he followed with as much interest as if he were her lover. They had, in fact, struck up a cordial friendship, and Pennie went and came about him with the quiet assurance of a woman who knows that her comings and goings are noted with satisfaction. He did not care what trouble he gave

her. It was Pennie here, Pennie there; I want this, give me that; read to me, sit where I can see you, child, and so forth; and Pennie was all cheerful obedience. He had ceased to think of her as either plain or queer; he only felt that she liked him, studied him, and was necessary to him. As for Pennie, if the present life could have gone on for ever, *she* would not have wearied of it.

By and by she turned towards the house, walking slowly, and stopping now and then to arrange her posy. Mr. Tindal called to her: "Pennie!" She looked up at the window, and stept that way. "I am brisker this morning, Pennie, ever so much. Grey told me again yesterday, that I might go home—must I?"

"There are your violets," tossing him lightly the fragrant tuft, tied with a green silk thread. He caught it, and said, "Was that the way she answered him?" Pennie smiled a little ruefully. Her mother had been tired of her guest from the beginning, and now most heartily wished he would take himself off—it was on a hint from her that the doctor had twice spoken.

"I shall bid Pierce bring the drag over for me this afternoon, Pennie, since you do not care."

"I am going back to Eastwold myself on Monday." It was now Thursday.

"Come in, and let us go on with our book. We shall not finish it now, but we will finish it some day." Pennie moved away from the window, and presented herself in the parlour. "Sit against the light, child. What is that pretty red-leaved thing just coming out by the glass? An American trailer —I thought so."

Pennie took up their book, placed herself where she was told, and began to read. It was an Italian story of Manzoni's, by means of which Mr. Tindal had undertaken to improve her accent. The passage was a description of wild mountain scenery at sunset. She went through a page or more without interruption, and then, glancing off her book towards her master, said: "You are not attending." He was gazing at her nevertheless, meditatively, through the fumes of his cigar, and he heard her voice, though not her words. He asked why she did not go on, and she proceeded, always aware that he was, as

she said, "not attending" to her pronunciation. Presently she paused again, and Mr. Tindal emerged from his abstraction.

"It is not interesting to-day, is it? Put it by, and let us talk," said he. "You are sorry—I see you are, and so am I."

Yes. There were tears in Pennie's eyes—foolish tears. "I don't know why," said she, and tried to laugh, and shake them away.

"So end all pleasant things! Come here, my child," he held out his hand to her, and she gave her own, looking away out of the window to hide her face. Poor Pennie, tears were not becoming to her, but she never thought of that. Her heart was very full; its pang quite as acute as that which wrings the bosom of fair women in the like case. She was young, and hardly comprehended her own distress. It was something much more poignant than the parting pain; something sprung of odd mysterious words heard here and there, whose meaning in her new self-consciousness she had never dared to ask. She was feeling after it, when Mr. Tindal spoke again.

"Pennie, I am a venerable person in comparison with you, and have seen a deal of the world. I want to keep you for my friend, dating from the night when I limped broken-legged into this house. I used to have plenty of friends. I have none now,—only acquaintances. If you wish to know why, your mother, or anybody in Eskdale can tell you, who remembers the events of seven or eight years ago. Why do you look at me as if you were afraid?" She had turned with eyes of startled, troubled inquiry. He went on with more vehemence: "Pennie, I was watching your mouth as you read, and I made up my mind that you liked me, and would stick fast by me; that you would hear that terrible story—without being stirred from your kind opinion. I was going to ask a pledge of you."

"Ask it—*I* believe in you—I shall always believe in you," said Pennie in eager, tender haste to dissipate the pain and distrust she perceived she had caused. "I will not hear that story."

"Hear it, Pennie, but hear me first. I am as clear of that guilt as you, so help me heaven in my extremity!"

How had they travelled to this view down a dark vista from the violets, and the Alpine sunsets?

He was dreadfully excited, half mad for a moment. His mouth writhed and quivered, then his eyes filled, and tears quenched that ominous spark of the devil. His passion overawed Pennie, though it endured but a few seconds. She saw it, and it was gone; but it was never forgotten. There was silence in the air for a little while after, both wrestling for composure.

Presently Mr. Tindal said: "I have vowed to myself again and again, that recollection shall not master me—but it does, it does yet! Mine is no better than a dead life, Pennie, and I began it with all manner of high hopes. Don't you forsake me, child. See here—I made Pierce bring it from Rood a day or two since—it is a ring my mother wore. She told me on her death-bed to give it to the woman I married. No woman would venture to be my wife now, so I will give it you—a thank-offering for the only genuine bit of love and faith I have found since I lost her." He put it on a finger of her small brown right hand, wrung it, and let it go.

The April morning went on shining, the birds went on singing, and those two, suddenly and singularly allied, went on talking. A new and solemn interest had entered into Pennie's life. She was excited still, and did not see all its bearings, but she felt that something had come which she would not for the world have had pass her by, though there was such a strong under-current of trouble and mystery in it. Mr. Tindal reposed himself with watching her. It was not love, like his passionate young love, that he felt for Pennie, but only a longing for what would love him, and give him rest; be a medium through which, perhaps, he might return to the common pleasures, joys and cares of common life. For "that cottage-smoke, that confounded inclination towards sitting-still comfort," which Richter says, gnaw at a man's heart, had gnawed keenly at his for the last year or two of his vagabondage. He had been made originally of good metal that bends without breaking; and there was spring in him yet, though the weight that held him down had hung about his neck, until the best and hopefulest of the years of his life had drifted away, and he could even now, for the aching

weariness of it, only lift his eyes at distant moments to the sky. Since he had been at Mayfield he had won a little ease by grace of Pennie; had indulged a dream of entire freedom for an hour, but had lost it again in her frightened gaze. He could meditate calmly now.

"I have no right to ask her to share my burthen; but if the day should ever come that it falls off, and she is free, I will ask her to share my rest."

It was the first bit of planning and promising that he had made to himself during eight years that he had lain in bondage to an accusation of which there was neither proof nor disproof to be had. The world did not give him the benefit of the doubt, however. Pennie had dimly discerned in many speeches of her mother that some great peril hung suspended above his head, which might at any moment fall and crush him; but since he had spoken of it, and had given her that passionate asseveration of his innocence, the sense of unrest and perplexity had left her. She gave her mind now consciously to loving and trusting him; and if there seemed in her devotion something of sacrifice, to Pennie's temper

that was only a reason the more for persevering and being staunch.

The clock on the stairs struck twelve, and a minute or two later, Pierce, Mr. Tindal's man, came to the door, and Pennie left him with his master. The servant was worn and anxious-looking to a degree that pained kind folks to see him; as if at some time or other of his life he had had a blow that had broken him down, body, soul, and spirit. And that was the fact. He had been born and bred about Rood Abbey, had served Mr. Tindal's father and mother, had made the honour and fortunes of the house his own, as hereditary retainers of old families occasionally will. The calamity that had destroyed his young master's happiness had crushed him to the earth, and he had never risen from it since. He entered the parlour with his accustomed face of woeful astonishment, bowed respectfully to Pennie as he held the door open for her to pass, and then turned to the occupant of the sofa.

"How do you find yourself, sir?" said he tenderly, as one might address a friend lying in the shadow of death.

"Ready to go home. I want you to bring the drag over at four o'clock for me." Mr. Tindal spoke firmly and cheerfully: he never fell into his servant's despondent tone.

"You must take another turn abroad, sir, to set you up. Change of air and scene is good after an illness."

"I don't intend to go abroad again at present, Pierce. I shall do very well at Rood this summer." Pierce sighed unconsciously, and after a few more mournful words retired.

"I have eaten your salt a long while, Mrs. Croft; will you stop and break bread with me on Monday as you take Pennie back to Eastwold?" asked Mr. Tindal, when all else was said, and he was getting into the drag.

"Well, sir, we will if you wish it," replied the widow, not altogether graciously. Pennie stood with her at the garden-door, watching their guest's departure.

"Thank you very much," replied he, and smiled at Pennie. This had been agreed on between them previously.

The horses began to move, and Mrs. Croft at once drew Pennie back and shut the door. "Come in, my girl," said she. "How cold the east wind do blow, to be sure, for all it is so sunny! I wish Mr. Tindal hadn't asked us to go to Rood. I doubt we shall be the first that has been there since he fell into his trouble. It would ha' sounded unchristian to say him nay as he put it; but it isn't much appetite I shall have under his roof."

They went into the house, the mistress thereof snuffing up disconsolately the odour of tobacco that infected Pennie's parlour. "It must have a good clean down, and the curtains and things must be hanged out to sweeten for a day or two; but we won't begin on it till you're gone," said she, settling herself by the fire-side for a chat, and feeling more relieved to have her house to herself again than she knew how to express. Pennie placed herself on the opposite side of the hearth, and heard her mother recite what a bonny deal of extra work she had had since Mr. Tindal came, and what a bonny deal more there would be to do in getting things to rights now he was gone. "Not that I begrudge my trouble," said

she; "nobody that knows me 'ull think *that;* but I'd a fear and a terror upon me all the time lest something should be found out, and him taken while he was here."

"I am quite in the dark, mother," replied Pennie. "What is it makes the mystery about a man, whose nature it is to be easy and generous, open and kind?" He had bidden her hear the story; and she felt that it was not possible to live at peace with herself much longer in ignorance of it.

"What is it? Ay, you were too little to be telled, of course you were; but since you've made friends, it is good you should know, that you may take heed, and say nothing before him you shouldn't. I'm sure, poor fellow, I pitied him for one, and it laid his mother low. She never held up her head after, and Pierce was a'most as bad. Your Aunt Lister saved the *Norminster Gazettes* that had it all in. I dessay she'll lend 'em you to read."

"He gave me this ring for a keepsake," said Pennie, with a sudden impulse of confidence towards her mother, extending her hand with the old-fashioned diamond hoop upon it. Mrs. Croft drew it off

to look at it closer, and asked what were the words engraven inside—she could not see them without her glasses. "'God send me well to keep;'" that is what they are," replied Pennie. "'*God send me well to keep.*'"

"There's need He should keep us all," said the widow, staring thoughtfully into the fire. "There's a many unaccountable events happens in this world that never gets cleared up. We want to trust some one out and beyond of ourselves and of what's befallen us, that we do. We're poor weak creturs, here to-day and gone to-morrow." Mrs. Croft paused for a minute or two in pious meditation, and then began her story.

"I was at Rood when it was done, but *who did it* is the mystery that isn't bottomed yet, and never may be. We were all out in the gardens (and pretty gardens they were when Mrs. Tindal was alive) after lunch was over in the tent. Everybody had a story after, no two of 'em alike, so I'll only say what I saw myself. I was standing as it might be here," laying a hand on the table, "talking to Mrs. Raymond of Eskford (I should tell you it was at a

picnic at the Abbey, that Mrs. Tindal gave every summer to her friends, and the big tenants), talking to Mrs. Raymond in the shadow of some yew-trees, that stands yet on the slope near the river. There was a lot of low thick bushes behind us, and the shrubbery, near a couple of acres of it laid out in paths, and there the company chiefly was, for the day was August and melting. Not twenty steps off, higher up on the grass, there was three gentlemen in a group; one was Mr. Wynyard of Eastwold, one was Mr. Oxenden, parson at Berrythorpe, and the other was Mr. Tindal's brother, Hugh was his name, and he was a year a two older than Arthur—*him* you know. They was very merry all of 'em, talking as I could hear by chance words, of Norminster races that was to be the week after, and Hugh Tindal, with a braggadocio way he had, was just giving a toss with his left hand, when a gun was fired off in the bushes at the back of me. Hugh Tindal sprang straight up, a foot or two into the air, and fell forward, flat on his face—dead—shot through the heart. Before one could breathe, Arthur ran out from among the trees, and brushed by us, white and

staring, to where his brother lay. It was, you may believe, a terror and confusion. Some cried to keep off the ladies, some to fetch a doctor, some to search the plantations: everybody giving orders and nobody doing anything to a purpose, till Pierce came tottering down the lawn, and gave him one look. 'Cover his face,' says he, 'he's gone before his Maker that equally judges all.' I remember the words as if I'd heard 'em yesterday. Arthur helped to carry him in and lay him in his chamber. A fine-looking man he'd been as all the Tindals were, but a grief to the mother that bore him, and if he wasn't much belied, a shame and sorrow to other women as well as her."

"And they sought through the plantations, mother?" said Pennie with pulses almost at a stand."

"They sought 'em through and through for days, they raised a hue and cry all over the country. Who was at odds with Hugh Tindal? Who was to gain by his death? No one could ever tell where the first whisper came from that said his brother Arthur was the man; but before he was buried it was loud enough. Folks caught it up like wild-fire.

I won't deny, Pennie, that his look had struck me at the time, and had haunted me after, for all I said nothing. I won't deny either that I felt a prejudice against him then, or that I have any doubts still."

It was growing gloomy in the parlour; Mrs. Croft stirred the fire, threw on more wood, and made a blaze, while Pennie took up a newspaper, and held it for a screen betwixt her face and the light.

"It was murder," said the widow, re-seating herself, "as black a murder as was ever done. If Arthur Tindal did it, he has the devil's own front to brazen it out; if he didn't, he's suffered a world o' misery for another man's crime. Dr. Grey said he wondered the lad didn't curse God and die; for the doctor never would hear a word of Arthur's being the villain. They had him up on a warrant before the magistrates at Allan Bridge; every tittle they could swear against him was sworn, and he was committed to Norminster 'sizes. But when the 'sizes came on, the grand jury found no evidence in the bill likely to bring it home to him, and he was let out of gaol; for they said that if he was put on his trial *then*, he was sure to be acquitted, and the

law could never touch him after, though the best of proofs might turn up. And that's how he stands to this day, neither cleared nor condemned."

"It is a cruel case, mother. What cause was there for his being suspected?"

"Both he and Hugh were sweet on Miss Sylvia, Squire Curtis's daughter at Methley Towers, and though *she* was for Arthur, her family were all for the elder brother who had the property. Here was a sort of motive, if there had been enough to back it. But though some folks said the brothers had had words about her, it could not be made out that they had ever really quarrelled in their lives. The only stranger that had been seen about the place was a woman with a bairn at her back: a poor lost cretur who came, most likely, seeking harvest work. There's a short cut through the Rood plantations that leads to the Grange, and she was up and down, and hanging about for a bit of victual, I daresay. One of the lasses at the Abbey said she went to the back-door to beg, and Pierce drove her off with bad words. Then all of a sudden came the noise of what had happened in the garden, and when she was

hunted for, she wasn't anywhere to be found. But what could she have had to do with shooting Hugh Tindal, if they'd found her ever so, as people said? —a tramp with a baby. We may talk and talk, but we know nothing for certain, except that a deal of folks held to their hard thoughts of Mr. Arthur when all was said and done—ay, and holds to 'em still."

"What did Miss Sylvia do, and his mother? What did he do himself afterwards?" Pennie asked.

"His mother, poor thing, she died, a week or two before he came back from Norminster. Miss Sylvia believed what she was told, and that was the *worst*. He took it all in a proud bitter way, and stood his ground a goodish while at the Abbey before he gave up. I've heard Dr. Grey tell of his riding to the meet the winter after, and finding never a man but himself in the field to shake him by the hand. Folks said he'd taken to the property as if he was glad to get hold of it, and they kept him off like the plague. He's been a capital landlord, I must say, and has neglected nothing but his own place. He stayed there through the spring and summer by

himself, when it was newsed about that Miss Sylvia was going to be married to a Sir Thomas Brooke, a gentleman she'd met in London, and before the wedding was, he took himself off to France. It was only just before Christmas that he came back. Some people pities him in their hearts, I do believe, seeing him so forsaken, and yet holding his head up, and looking 'em in the face, like a man that won't let himself be killed by a lie if he can help it."

"It is a *lie*, mother; nothing else. Be sure of it. I am!" cried Pennie with tears in her voice.

"I wish I could be sure of it, joy; I've ever spoke him kindly for *fear* I was wronging him in my thoughts; but it is a real relief to my mind that he's gone to his own house again, and left me mine to myself. I wonder when Bessie's going to let us have any tea. I must be seeing after her. Pennie, love, if I was you I should say nothing to your cousins or Aunt Lister about that ring Mr. Tindal's given you; it will be better not. It is enough you've told me."

Pennie acquiesced, adding that she intended to

solicit silence on her mother's part had she not counselled it herself.

When Mrs. Croft rose the next morning Bessie had news for her. The loveliest of Alderney cows had just been led into the yard by Jacques, who was in the kitchen waiting to see her.

"If Jacques expects me to ware money on his lovely Alderney coo, he'll be disappointed," said the widow. "What has he brought her here for? I may ha' wished for a Alderney coo, but I've no thoughts o' buying one. Give him his breakfast, and I'll speak to him when I come down."

After a brief interview with the grazier, Mrs. Croft sought Pennie, her comely countenance all a-glow with satisfaction and surprise.

"It is very handsome of Mr. Tindal, I'm sure; and I never expected no return! What do you think, Pennie, love? He's sent me a present of a Alderney coo, a perfect picture she is! Come out and look at her—such a downright beauty as 'll make your Aunt Lister a'most jealous o' Mayfield dairy."

Pennie did not need twice bidding. She seized

her straw hat, and followed her mother across the barnyard to the daisied pasture, into which Jacques and old Jacob were inducting the Alderney.

"See ye here, Miss Penelope!" cried Jacob, "see ye here, this pritty, sweet, dossil cretur, you'll ha' to larn milking, that you will."

"If Miss hasn't larnt milking yet, it's time she did, and here's a rael coo that a queen might milk," added Jacques.

Pennie stepped into the deep dewy grass to caress the beautiful animal.

"Let us call her Daisy, mother, the dainty, prim thing," said she. "Oh, what soft, gentle eyes, and a skin like satin!"

"She'll tek to her: she'll larn milking noo, she will," chuckled Jacob; Pennie's reluctance to "larn milking" being a standing theme of argument between him and the "young missis."

Second only to the pleasure of receiving Mr. Tindal's munificent gift was the pleasure of telling about it. Pennie was in nowise astonished to hear her mother propose that after dinner they should take a walk over to the Grange to see her Aunt Lister.

"You'll fall to bid her good-by before you go, and this may be the last chance you'll have. But you'll come for a week or so in haying time, Pennie, love, won't you?"

Pennie replied that she certainly would if it depended only on herself to arrange it.

The report of the Alderney cow had flown to the Grange before them, and Mrs. Lister was full primed with congratulations.

"We have heard of your fine present, sister, and I'm sure you're in luck," said she. "Jacques tells Dick she's the very beautifulest young coo ever he bought. His orders was not to stick at price, and I dessay it is worth every penny he paid for it; for Jacques is a judge of a coo. I shall step down to Mayfield some day next week, and look at her. I've always wanted a Alderney, though master likes his own breed best; Alderneys is such good uns for cream and butter."

"They are. I'm right pleased, I can tell you. But I never looked for no such return."

"It is no more than right though, sister, that he should make one. You must have had a sight o'

extry work—bad as a month's wash going on for six or seven weeks."

"Nay, nay, not such a harass as *that*. Since he took the turn to mend, Pennie's had most o' the watching, and keeping him quiet wi' reading. It was sitting still got over me. But now, God be thanked, he's all right, and is gone home to the Abbey again."

"I'm sorry your cousins is out, Pennie," said her aunt, turning to her with a little stiffness. "They've rode over all three of 'em to Litherby Force. If they'd known you was free, they'd ha' been glad o' your company, I dessay. We have seen nothing of you for a month an' better."

"Poor gel, she's been tied pretty close," said the widow, rallying to the defence of her daughter whom she felt that her Aunt Lister rather pecked at. "When she's gone out, it has only been into th' garden of a morning, or for a canter on the moor of an afternoon, when I can best bear sitting still myself. It hasn't been gay visiting at Mayfield this time—always excepting *your* beautiful party and Mrs. Jones's—but she's been a good lass, and a comfort

to her mother, that she has, and I don't care who knows it."

"If I was to praise my Lucy to her face i' that way, she'd be so set-up as never was. But I dessay Pennie's got more sense. You'll stop and have a cup o' tea, sister, won't you? The master's gone to Norminster for to-morrow's market, but Dick and the gels 'ull be back by three."

Pennie was rather sorry to hear her mother consent, but she did not show it; and when she went upstairs to take off her bonnet, she put on her best behaviour. And she had her reward. Dick and his sisters came home in high good-humour, all more or less tired, and pre-disposed to be quiet, and just as tea was set on the table, in dropped a little brisk gentleman with grizzled hair and whiskers—the new vicar of Rood, whose predecessor had lately been promoted to a parish and a canon's stall at Norminster.

The Rev. Harry Featherston was making his first round of visits to his flock, and when he was warmly invited to share the evening meal at the Grange, he did not excuse himself by reason of his dinner with his wife being at seven, but sat

down like a man of the world, took a cup of tea, and laid a good foundation of opinion in his two leading female parishioners' minds at once. He was already well up in the annals of his cure. When Mr. Tindal's name was mentioned, he looked grave and passed no remark; when Mrs. Lister caused him to discriminate between her own daughters and her niece, he showed his knowledge of Pennie's wardship, by inquiring how Dr. Brown at Eastwold was, adding that Eastwold had been his own first curacy. Half-an-hour passed pleasantly and swiftly; and when Mrs. Croft intimated, as the vicar took his leave, that she was losing her daughter on Monday, he said: "Then I will bring my wife to see her to-morrow. They ought to be acquainted." Pennie was glad, thinking how much more agreeable it would be for her at Mayfield, if she had a friend in the clergyman's wife, than it was with only her cousins and Mrs. Jones.

She and her mother did not stay long after Mr. Featherston was gone, for the daylight was already waning, and neither of them had any fancy for a walk home in the dark. When they were ready to go,

Mrs. Lister called to her son : " Dick, you'll set your aunt and cousin Pennie, a piece of the way home, won't you ? "

Of course he would, and his hat was on his good-natured curly head in a minute. Pennie had kissed her aunt and cousins good-by, and had gone a few paces down the path towards the garden-gate, when Dick issuing from the porch, said : " Not that way, Pennie. We'll cut off a bit of the road by going through the Abbey woods. It isn't dark yet, and I dessay none of us is afraid o' ghosts."

" Not us ! " responded Mrs. Croft cheerfully. " And we'll just ask at the lodge as we pass what sort of day Mr. Tindal's had. You've heard of the beautiful Alderney coo, he's given me, Dick ? " The key-note of their conversation thus struck, Pennie let her mother and cousin walk on before ; and thinking her own thoughts, followed up the gloaming meadows that lay between the Grange and the Abbey woods.

VII.

ROUND ABOUT ROOD ABBEY.

The way was not long. In rising the gradual ascent from the river, Pennie could discern the front of the Abbey, all the windows blank except one on the ground floor, which shone with a red glow through the twilight. She said to herself that *there* Mr. Tindal was, and when she lost it again at the entering into the woods, she felt that the night had fallen dark all at once. Under the fir-trees it was very gloomy, but up near the Abbey, the plantations opened into glades, and winding paths of shrubbery, through which again were glimpses of the grey walls, the bright window, and the shadowy gardens. At a certain point, Mrs. Croft waited until Pennie came up, and while professing to take breath, managed to intimate, without calling Dick's attention, that hereabouts was

the place from whence had come the shot that killed Hugh Tindal. Pennie shivered irrepressibly as she glanced round on the undistinguishable bushes growing close to the ground, with the boles of tall trees springing up amongst them, and the black clump of yews not ten paces off on the open slope of the lawn.

Five minutes more brought them to the lodge, on the steps of which stood Pierce. In answer to Mrs. Croft's inquiries, he said his master had passed a favourable day, and had been out a little while in the garden. Dick went no further than the old Abbey gateway, and once on the high-road, Pennie and her mother stept out fast. It was a dry, sharp night with an eerie east wind whispering in the rookery trees which spread their broad boughs over the garden wall, and darkened the path. The church and the vicarage stood about mid-way between Rood and Mayfield, and they had just crossed the grave-yard, which cut off an angle, and shortened their walk, when Pennie said she was sure she heard a child crying, and stopt to listen. Her mother urged her to come on, but the pitiful little voice rose shrill and terrified, and she could not resist

the impulse to run back along the road to see if the child were alone. No, lying on the path under the churchyard wall was a woman, fallen insensible, so far as Pennie could judge—at all events, fallen helpless ; and running to and fro, equally helpless, making the night echo with her cries, was a little girl, barefooted, bare-headed, all one flutter of ragged clothing and ragged hair. Her loud complaint had been heard at the vicarage also, and as Mrs. Croft reached the spot, a female servant appeared hurrying down from the house.

"She's drunk, I dessay. Whisht, bairn, whisht, you're enew to deave a body!" grumbled the last comer. "Oh, Mrs. Croft, ma'am, is that you? It's so dusk, I didn't know you at the moment, I'm sure."

Apologies and compliments were abbreviated by the arrival first of the vicar, and then of the vicar's man. By this time Pennie and her mother had contrived to raise the forlorn wayfarer's head, and to discern that it was probably famine, and not drink, that had overtaken her on her journey. The vicar ordered her to be carried into his kitchen, and while this was being done, Pennie tried her best to still the

child. It was food and warmth she craved rather than caresses, and though her keen cry sank to a wail at the sight of the fire and the strange faces, it sounded even more distressing. As soon as they had seen the poor waifs taken under shelter, Mrs. Croft whispered to Pennie, that they were in good hands, and she had better leave them, and come away; for she could be of no use, but only in the road.

The stranger had been set down in a chair by the hearth, and divested of a tattered shawl that covered her head. While Mrs. Featherston administered strong stimulants to restore her to consciousness, the child crouched beside her, quiet now, devouring a cake that the cook had given her. She appeared about seven or eight years old, but she either could not, or would not answer the questions put to her, except only that her name was Alice, and the woman was her mother. Presently, like a little tired dog, she coiled herself up and went to sleep. It was so long before the woman showed any sign of returning sensibility that Mrs. Featherston grew alarmed, and would have Doctor Grey sent for; but before he could arrive, she had rallied, had taken some food, and had

risen to be gone. This, however, the vicar would not permit, and when she saw he was peremptory, she resigned herself, and sat passively staring into the fire.

Oh! the wan, wasted, dreadful face! Mrs. Featherston, who was a round little rosy button of a woman, and knew nothing of the wicked world but what she read in good books, looked at it like a revelation. This was the manner of face that haunted the ghastly London lanes where the Bible-women went to seek out souls that were perishing. This was the mask that womanly beauty took on when guilt and misery had drenched the womanly nature through and through. What did she here—offscouring of some foul city streets in the green lanes of Eskdale?

Dr. Grey arrived in a fuss—it was much, the messenger had told him, if he found the woman alive when he got to the vicarage. As he came into the kitchen she turned her head to the door, and he stood with the latch in his hand for a minute facing her—evidently recognizing her, and she as evidently recognizing him. She began to fumble at her shawl to put it on, and roughly shook the child awake.

"Get up, Alice, let us be going," whispered she, always with her eyes on the doctor.

"Stop a bit, there's no hurry," said he kindly. "I don't like to have a ride by night for nothing."

Cook and the other servants were about their business again. No one witnessed this unexpected meeting but Mrs. Featherston, and she was discretion itself. She could see all without seeming to see anything. The doctor soon told her what she had already discovered, that want and misery were the sickness he had been called to heal; and then again the desolate woman said she would be going; she wanted to get to Allan Bridge, to the poor-house where they would take her in.

"She might as well," said the doctor, addressing the vicar's wife. "She would be in the way of your servants here. I'll give her a cast in my gig, and drop her at the door."

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, she was ready; the child was on its feet, and the old rag of a shawl that had covered her own head, was cast over its elf locks. Mrs. Featherston quickly brought from her clothes store, a coarse hooded

duffel cloak, which she gave to her—to *keep*, said the little rosy woman chokingly, in reply to an eager question. The doctor helped her into his gig, lifted the child into her lap, and drove off through the now murk night, while the vicar's wife sought her husband in his study, and announced with an air of discovery, "She is an Eskdale woman, John. Doctor Grey knew her, though he did not choose to say anything."

"Is this Hugh Tindal's child, Alice Pierce?" asked Doctor Grey when he had driven on in silence for a few minutes.

"Yes, doctor. My father's at the Abbey now, isn't he, sir?" The doctor replied in the affirmative. They were just passing the gateway. The lodge within was all dark; the house through the trees invisible.

"Have you been in Eskdale since you went away with him?"

"Once—only once. I was here that day he was shot, doctor. *I saw it done.* I wish I was dead!"

"It is a keen night: wrap your cloak over your

breast. You saw it done, did you, Alice? You know that it has always been laid to his brother Arthur?"

"No, I know nothing. I saw him drop, struck through his bad heart, and I went my way. I'd no call to cry for him. My father sent a curse after me, and refused me a bit to eat. Oh, if *she* was only dead, and I was dead!"

There was another silence which lasted until they were nearly at their journey's end. As the gig crossed the old steep bridge of a single arch over the little river Allan, which gave the country town its name, the doctor said: "The master and matron at the house are man and wife, strangers here; they come from Liverpool way. They will not recognize you, if nobody else does. I should advise you to stay quietly there until you have recovered your strength, and then to try if your father will forgive you, and put you in the way of earning a decent living. I suppose that was your object in coming, Alice?"

"I don't know what was my object, doctor; it was like as if I could not help it. And now I'd fain

be back where I came from. I've no hope, and I can get no rest. It is all just judgment—the scourge that's driving me, I twined and knotted it myself."

The doctor did not gainsay her. The gig stopped opposite a high wall with a white door in it, at which he got out and rang, the rickety-rackety jangle of a broken bell answering his energetic pull, and waking up all the echoes and sleeping dogs in the bleak market-place. After the lapse of a minute or two the master appeared at the door with a lantern.

"Jefferson, here's a woman and child the parson at Rood picked up starving by the way-side. The woman must go into the infirmary. I'll drop in early to-morrow and see her."

"Very good, Doctor Grey. Old Sainsbury's gone dead this afternoon, sir; he went off quite quiet at last."

"Ah, well, it's a release. You'll look well to the woman; she may want an eye on her, you understand?"

This confidential communication made and responded to, the doctor helped Alice out of

the gig, saw her and the child pass into the poor-house yard, and then drove slowly across the market-place to his own door, cogitating very seriously on the night's adventure. If it had not been so late he would have turned his horse's head back again to Rood there and then; for here was a difficulty to unravel harder than a tom-fool's knot to untie.

The doctor was not a man of energy except in the way of his business, but he was a man of heart and probity. He could know a thing about which all the world was curious without yearning to achieve a cheap notoriety by talking of it. His morning thoughts were not less grave than his night thoughts, but they were more cautious and reserved, and when he saw Alice again, he was glad he had not gone to Rood on the spur of the event. She shared the sick ward with two women so ancient that they were past minding anything but gruel, tea, snuff, and the fire. Her bed was next the window, and there she lay, wakeful and anxious, when he entered.

"Give me something to make me sleep, doctor; the longer the better," said she. "I've had no rest all night. I should like to shut my eyes, and never

open 'em no more." She did not mention her child, nor did the doctor tell her that the little creature was fretful, sickening, he feared, for the scarlet fever. Misery is selfish, and her own sensations absorbed her. The matron was within earshot, and the rheumy, mazy eyes of the ancient women were looking that way. The doctor could only speak his common formula of question, counsel and comfort, and go; but he contrived to convey to Alice an intimation that the secret of her being there would not be noised abroad by him.

After his visit to the poor-house, Dr. Grey set forth on his daily round, leaving Buckhurst at home to answer casual comers. He took Rood Abbey nearly the last, arriving on his visit to Mr. Tindal about the middle of the afternoon. Pierce ushered him into the library where his master was, and left them together. Mr. Tindal had been employed in looking over a file of old newspapers when he was interrupted. He was tired and dispirited—had been doing too much, as the doctor plainly told him.

"I want my little nurse to amuse me. You are

her guardian, Grey, along with Wynyard of Eastwold, are you not?"

"Yes, I believe I am; but she has nothing to thank me for in the way of care," replied the doctor, awakening all of a sudden to an embarrassing case, which had grown up under his nose quite unobserved and unsuspected. He shirked away from it, for the moment, by inquiring what his patient had been doing to get so weary and excited.

"Trying to find a way out of the wood," said Mr. Tindal, pointing to the newspapers strewn on the floor and table. "I will rest no more until I do. There *is* a way, and I think I descry the guide-post."

"Ha! I wish you luck, that I do. What track are you on?"

"You remember the whole dreadful business?"

"As well as if it had only happened yesterday."

"There is a story in Monday's *Times* of a girl shooting a soldier in the park—shooting him dead: for jealousy and revenge, of course. My brother Hugh had given more than one woman the same reason to change love for hatred, and sweet for bitter: notably, Alice Pierce and Aimée Vibert.

Could that dark gipsy-coloured woman who was sought after—but not half sharply enough—have been Aimée? Alice was light-complexioned."

"Yes, Alice was fair," repeated the doctor. "Grey eyes, clear pale skin, not much colour, and nut-brown hair. A proud lass in her innocent days, but not one to stop half-way to the devil when she had started."

"Her father assures me he has never seen or heard word of her since she left her home. She may be living or she may be dead, for anything he knows—or wants to know."

"Ha!" ejaculated the doctor, thinking to himself how shrewdly the old fox had kept her secret, and confirmed in some pre-conceived strong suspicions by Pierce's falsehood. There had always been a misty crooked notion in his mind that the woman in the wood was the assassin, and that Hugh Tindal got only right served for his sins. After a brief pause he asked his patient: "Could you ever guess where the first whisper rose from against *you*?"

"Never. I had not an enemy in the world that I was aware of. I had done no man wrong, and no

woman either. My only rival was Hugh himself—in whose good graces was shouted out on the house-tops. I hear she is very happy with Sir Thomas Brooke, and thrives amazingly."

"Yes, she is fat and well-liking, and either takes troubles lightly to heart, or has a light heart to take 'em to. She has buried three children, and keeps one—a son."

Mr. Tindal took a cigar. "You don't smoke, Grey, I know." He enjoyed his own pleasure for some minutes in brooding silence, but just as the doctor was beginning to feel his company superfluous, he brought forth his thought." You are the one friend that never had a doubt of me, and therefore I can talk to you face to face. Has it ever occurred to you as an interpretation of Pierce's most remarkable dolour that *he* could tell the truth about Hugh's murder if he would?"

"I'll tell you what has occurred to me—that his behaviour and manner of speaking to and of you, have done more than anything else to keep alive the suspicion that was bred nobody knows how, and nobody knows where. He is so confoundedly pro-

tective and guarded, both in your presence and behind your back, that he suggests to sentimental minds the notion that he is standing always between you and a dreadful fate."

"So said my deft little nurse at Mayfield. Pennie declares that Pierce provokes her past her patience. I have entreated him to put off his mourning, and go less like a ghost, but to no purpose. And the man's anguish is real enough, Grey—there's no feigning there. If his Alice had been swarthy, I think I could have unriddled the riddle. I mean to try hard as it is—I have a reason more than I had for wishing to be cleared."

"I can read your reason; well—you shall have my consent; Pennie is a worthy little lady. But let the clearing go before the declaration, Tindal. She is very young, she has a great fortune, and we live in a censorious age."

"I wish she had not a sixpence! I don't want her money, but herself—she understands me."

"Not a doubt of it, and I daresay she likes you the better for being an ill-used man."

"I am not sure of that. Pennie hates a mystery.

She is as eager as I am that the cloud should break."

"Should you know Aimée Vibert if you saw her, or Alice Pierce?"

"Not Aimée—I never saw her, but amongst Hugh's things there were some miniatures—I'll show you them. I have devised no plan of proceedings yet; a blood-hunt is not after my heart, but I think I shall set a search on foot after Aimée." As Mr. Tindal spoke, he unlocked a drawer in a cabinet by the fire-place, and brought out several small cases which he opened, and handed in succession to the doctor.

"Ah, poor Alice, this is very like her,—and this is Aimée? A dark skin, Tindal, but not a bad countenance."

"No; tender, touching. There is more of the Magdalen repentant about her than about Alice. That is Lady Brooke."

"'Umph—time has increased her charms. Pretty sylph here—she is almost overwhelming for figure now."

At this moment Pierce threw open the door, and

announced Mr. Featherston. While Mr. Tindal received him, the doctor closed the cases, and laid them in a pile together. After a minute or two of general talk he rose to leave.

"One moment, Grey; how is that poor woman?" said the vicar, arresting his departure. "Is she at the poor-house?"

"Yes; I saw her this morning. She wants rest and nourishment; nothing more."

"You don't know where she came from? My wife is interested in her."

"No, I do not," answered the doctor, point-blank. In fact, he did not know where Alice had come from; and leaving the clergyman under the impression that his shrewd little wife was mistaken, he made his escape.

Pierce attended him to his gig with his usual soft-going mournfulness. The doctor compassionated him from his soul; but there was irritation mingled with his pity. He eyed the old servant keenly, and asked with some abruptness, "Have you any intelligence of Alice yet, Pierce?"

"That is what my master has been asking me

this very morning, sir. Have I any intelligence of Alice yet?" said he, giving no direct reply, but looking up in his questioner's face with tremulous agitation.

"Well, have you? God knows, Pierce, that I am not the man to be hard on you or on her, but don't you think, honestly now, that the innocent has suffered for the guilty long enough? Look what his life has been. Wasn't it *you* that breathed the blight on it to screen the woman in the wood; and wasn't the woman your Alice? Perhaps Hugh Tindal did not get much beyond his deserts; but that sort of wild justice has ceased to be appreciated in these days. If you knew where Alice was, would you help her out of the country, and then would you let in what daylight you can upon that tragedy? It must dawn sooner or later."

"But I don't know where she is, sir. I hope she's gone where the weary are at rest."

"No, Pierce, she is in the poor-house at Allan Bridge—she and her child. She has told me that she was *here* that afternoon, and *saw it done*. It is all coming out plain enough to me."

"She is my daughter, sir,—what would you have me to do?" asked the old man, in an agony of appealing misery.

"I would have you tell your master *all* you know, and without delay." There was no suggestion of compromise in Doctor Grey's aspect, and his tone intimated that if Pierce did not follow his advice, he would certainly speak himself.

"Give me a little time, sir! Oh! if you knew the winsome thing she was—the pretty winsome thing. No one remembers that but me. They could never have proved it against Mr. Arthur. I was well aware of that, sir."

"A man might as well be dead as carry Cain's mark upon him. It will be safer to confess now than to keep silence, for he will not bear it any longer in peace." The doctor gently shook the reins, and turned out through the old Abbey gateway, in the open court within which, secure from listeners, this conversation had taken place.

The church bells were ringing for morning service at Allan Bridge, and all the respectable population of

the little town were trooping across the market-place to the wide open doors, when Doctor Grey set forth on his Sunday round. He was sprucer in his dress, as became the better day, but working, with him, had often to stand for praying, and it was rarely he saw the inside of a church. His district extended far and wide amongst the hills, and he went on his mission of healing as sedulously to the crippled broom-maker, who lived high upon the moor near Pedlar's Bones, as he did to the well-paying squirearchy and yeomanry who had their comfortable being in the rich lowlands of the dale. His first visit was, as usual, to the poor-house.

The matron brought him, to begin with, into a faint, chill room, where Alice's child was the solitary occupant. The little creature was unconscious, tossing, fretting, and moaning in a burning fever. "I don't think she'll pull through it, Doctor Grey," said the woman. "They rarely do when they are like this." The doctor asked if her mother had been told. "No, sir; master judged it better not. She is as flighty herself as ever she can be. She has got a sleepless fit on her like that young woman we had

to move to Norminster Asylum last autumn. I shouldn't wonder if she ended there too; it is horrid to hear her grinding her teeth, and raging, as if she had something bad on her mind."

"Does she talk much?"

"Nothing to be understood, sir; only wishing herself dead, and that. Mr. Clewer was here yesterday afternoon, but she was sullen then, and took no notice; though I do think if ever there was a young minister that had the right way with him in dealing with such as come here, it is surely him."

"I'll go up to her, and just you call old Hannah and Sally Perkins out of the way. If she is low, you must watch her."

When Doctor Grey entered the sick ward, Alice was sitting up in her bed, her face bowed down upon her knees, rocking her body to and fro, and moaning in the misery of her heart. He called her twice before she heard, and raised her haggard eyes; and then, after staring vacantly at him for a moment, she dropped her head once more into its former position. "I will come in again later," said the doctor, as he passed the matron on the stairs. "You can only

take care at present that she does herself no mischief. Her wits are going." The matron fancied the doctor was very short, and not so feeling as he generally was. She could not guess what a relief he was experiencing to think that perhaps God might be pleased to call this poor soul to His mercy, and thus to simplify a task that he felt to be cruelly difficult.

He took Rood first in his round this morning. Mr. Tindal had gone out into the sun, and was making a tour of the lawn, with the aid of Pierce's arm and a stick. He looked delicate, but fresh and almost gay. Pierce was as usual desolate and respectful. "This is a good move," said the doctor. "You will soon colour again in the air; your skin takes kindly to the tan. Exchange Pierce's arm for mine a few minutes."

The servant resigned his office and retired, his master looking after him with a countenance almost of compunction. "He has told me, Grey. Poor old Pierce, I've known him from a lad! I had not the heart to be righteously indignant when I heard that it was perhaps to save his own daughter, I had

been sacrificed. The sudden sense of release at last was too great happiness to be spoilt by crucifying him anew. What a life he must have led—for he has loved me after a manner, and has felt every pang, every humiliation, every loss that came on me like a fresh sin added to his burthen—he says so; I declare I gave him not one reproach; I could not."

"It must have been a deliberate deed—if she did it. A journey—a disguise; and what do you propose to do in the matter, Tindal? Vengeance for Hugh's murder is evidently not in your thoughts."

"I have given Pierce a promise to bear my yoke, and not to publish the fact of Alice being here that miserable day, until she is out of the road. Pray, therefore, that it may be soon."

"I daresay it will." The doctor then gave Mr. Tindal an account of how he had found Alice that morning. He listened, but his inclination was rather to expatiate on his own feeling of freedom and buoyant life, than to hear any mournful history. He said his first impulse had been to go to Church to give thanks, but Pierce had suggested that it would be so strange to see him there, the people might

wonder; so he had come out under the open heaven instead.

"I only long to tell Pennie, but I shall refrain; when I tell her that, I shall tell her more besides. You have vouchsafed me your consent, Grey," he added pleasantly.

"Yes." The doctor had not leisure to stay long at this time of the day, and soon Mr. Tindal had his garden and his contented thoughts to himself. As he sat in a sunny south-sheltered corner, near the house, he could hear floating across the still Sunday fields the sweet singing in church, and his own soul swelled with gratitude to the Almighty power that, after all his straying in the wilderness, had set his feet once more in a straight and open path.

Amongst the many sad and painful things he had to remember, he had perhaps fewer to regret than most men of his age. Originally of the better end of human kind, even his terrible calamity had not been able to pervert his sense of the right and the good. He had taken the lot that had fallen to him, never willingly indeed, but at length submissively, and when he could no longer endure the

averted faces, and suspicious regards that met him everywhere about home, he had betaken himself to the wider world, where men come and go, and no one asks whence or whither. Thus he had lived by necessity, as hundreds live by choice—without friends or intimates—hanging only on the acquaintances of a week or a day.

Who knew the streets of the world more wisely than Arthur Tindal? or the churches, the theatres, the prisons, the antiquities, the pictures, the things old or the things new that are to be seen for a silver fee? He was not drawn to the deserts and solitudes of the earth. If he must be alone, still let it be in a crowd. He liked to move amongst his kind, to hear voices, to watch the little dramas that are perpetually enacting on the stage of life. Pierce travelled with him everywhere—a lugubrious shadow projected out of the dismal past, a *memento mori* that never ceased its sighing. Yet neither shadow nor sighing could get their cold chill into his bones. He raged now and then indeed furiously. What a capacity for happiness he had—what a keen sense of appreciation for the feast of earthly good things, at which he

might never sit down!—for who sits and eats in peace with Damocles' sword hanging by a hair above his head, and with his *convives* eyeing him askance as if his presence were poison in the dish? He looked on, thinking no more to taste the sweet and the savoury, mingled for most mortals so ingeniously with the bitter of life. He looked on, sarcastically, sadly, yearningly, hungrily for nearly seven years. He had a taste and a palate still undulled, and an appetite that, instead of turning away sick, grew only more and more craving, until he declared at last he must eat or die.

So it came to pass one morning shortly before Christmas, being then at Avignon, he announced to Pierce his determination to return to England. The servant exerted his utmost efforts at dissuasion in vain. His master would go. He had been long enough a stranger and pilgrim, and he would return to the house of his fathers. Who could tell whether the Eskdale families might not have repented their harsh behaviour, and be willing now to give him again the hand of fellowship? He had reached home. Rood Abbey received him without a welcome.

A week—a fortnight—a month elapsed. Not a man sought him out. He mounted his horse and rode to the meet at Berrythorpe; he followed the field all day; he was in at the death, but nobody appeared to recognize him as one of their company. He had gone away, a rustic young fellow, under an awful cloud; he had returned, a man with the air of travel, experience, cultivation, and world-weariness. Spring and summer, autumn and winter, the times and the seasons had gone their round, but the bovine fixity of Eskdale opinion had stirred not a whit. Here was the Cain who had killed his brother; the mark had been plainly set; let him be outcast still.

A feeling akin to despair had descended on him when he saw there was no repentance and no change. He went about glooming, and trying to fight it off. It was during one of his dark days that he met Penelope Croft riding to Mayfield with her mother. It was during another that he fell before their hospitable door, was taken in, was taken care of, and had his wounds bound up with tender Christian charity. Whether he would have seen love in Pennie's eyes had they met, where all was gay and

all serene, is a doubtful question. Perhaps he would not have taken patience to consider the face that was more pathetic than pretty, that had no regularity of feature or beautiful bloom of colour. But shut up with it so often alone, he had learnt to see that the countenance was womanly and thoughtful, that the eyes were now sparkling with mischief, now soft with an inexpressible tenderness, that the mouth was delicately firm, the skin clear and smooth as satin, and susceptible of a rosy flush under provocation. Pennie was fastidiously dainty and neat in all her belongings. She satisfied the most critical taste by her exquisite personal cultivation, and Mr. Tindal had not much to do beyond criticizing and observing her for ever so long. She gained by this close scrutiny; person, temper, mind—all stood the test; and when the time came for him to leave this little lady, he discovered that he loved her with all his heart.

He was dreaming of her, painting the scenery for the second act in his life, all through the service-time in Church; and when loudly, through the open doors, the organ sounded the dismissal, he was still busy with his air-drawn pictures.

VIII.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

Penelope Croft walked from the church to the vicarage gate with her new friend, Mrs. Featherston. They talked of good things like good hopeful women, but only a word or two of importance to this chronicle passed between them. "The Abbey pew was empty," said the vicar's wife.

"Mr. Tindal would hardly be able to walk to church yet," replied Pennie.

"Ah, no! When he is well, I hope he will come regularly, if it be only for the example's sake. As for that sad story about him, I don't believe a word of it, neither does Harry. We intend to do all our possible to rehabilitate him."

Pennie's eyes lightened. She could have kissed that rosy little woman for her French idiom on the

spot, though it was not her wont to express her feelings in that embracive fashion.

Her mother and Mrs. Jones were following close behind, and a thin stream of cottagers and farm-servants was oozing on before. When Pennie parted with the vicar's wife she held on her way by herself. It was a very sunshiny day, warm for the season, and the spring was appearing in verdant touches here and there amongst the earlier budding trees. She felt happy—so happy and tranquil after her prayers, and her quiet, loving, trusting thoughts. Pennie's was a genial religion. It never occurred to her that joy and gladness amongst His creatures could be offensive to the great giver of all good; and because she was happy, she was thankful. She kept time with her step to the singing in her heart, and when she came to the old garden-door, and waited to bid Mrs. Jones good-day, that generous soul exclaimed in a gush of admiration,—"Why, Miss Pennie, you've got quite a colour! You'll come out a'most bonny enow." Love and pious thoughts are indeed rare and delicate painters, and they and April together had been giving, for the last few days,

some very tender and elevating touches to her ugly, pathetic, young face.

One of Pennie's distresses at Mayfield was the Sunday afternoon. Her father and mother had always felt their religious devoir well done when the morning service was over, and though the church-bells chimed again for evening prayers at three o'clock, the worshippers they drew from the rich farm-houses were very few. To hold a *levée* of friends during those long hours when best clothes must be worn out of respect for the day, was Mrs. Croft's delight, as it had been her husband's; and it was only heavy rain or snow that balked her of her weekly treat. Mr. Hargrove, Mr. Buckhurst, Mr. Briggs and his wife, or Jessie, would walk over from Allan Bridge, and drop in for a gossip, which, when the days were long, ended always in their stopping tea. Tom Boothby, Mr. Gaskill, and old Bobby Clough would turn up about once in three months, and more frequently Mr. Lister and Dick, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones. There were many others besides these to whom the hospitable widow gave entertainment as they listed—pipes and hollands, or toast and tea.

From this noisy Sunday society Pennie recoiled with the keenest repulsion. It had been intermitted during Mr. Tindal's residence in the house, but she foresaw that on this afternoon it would arrive in great force, and as soon as dinner was over, she put on her bonnet to go to church to avoid it as long as possible. Her mother remonstrated faintly, but Pennie kissed her, and went her way with gentle determination.

Rood Church was still unrestored. Frequent whitewashing had blunted the sharpness of arch and capital, and the wood-work throughout, wherever it was not patched with a piece of deal board, was fretted and decayed. Pennie took her seat in the Grange pew which faced the Tindal pew, one on either side of the chancel, and she had not been many minutes in her place, before the service began, and she became aware of an opposite neighbour in Mr. Tindal. He had no book, and he gazed about him without reserve until he espied her, when he grew a shade more decorous in his behaviour, and graduated gently into perfect propriety. He had not been within the doors of an English church for seven years, and the cold, bald unsightliness of this struck

him with surprise and discomfort; for it was his own. Schemes of re-edification immediately suggested themselves to him, and he resolved to consult Pennie about it on the morrow; Pennie was sure to be interested in such a work. He could not keep his thoughts from straying during either the prayers or the sermon, but he felt the better for being where he was, and when he spoke a few words to Pennie in the churchyard afterwards, she knew that he was a world easier in his heart than when he left Mayfield. She wondered what had happened, but there was no opportunity of asking, for Mrs. Featherston came up with kind inquiries and congratulations on his recovery, and Pierce was waiting for him with the drag at the gate. "To-morrow," was all he said after, but it was quite enough to send Pennie home content.

When she arrived there the parlour was very loud. She heard Bobby Clough's voice first, and then Mr. Hargrove's, and she made her stay upstairs as long as she dared. She had the satisfaction of seeing the old beau-bachelor depart; and with him an unknown farmer person who was Mr. Briggs; but when Bessie came to tell her she had taken in tea, Mr. Hargrove

was still there, and he remained. Some confidential talk was passing between him and the widow, which ceased abruptly as Pennie entered the room, and she felt sure the subject of it was herself. Her mother's heart was easily unlocked and robbed of its secrets, and when Pennie saw the lawyer's eyes fixed on the ring with which Mr. Tindal had adorned her hand, she was convinced that he had been made the depositary of her confidence. Mrs. Croft thought highly of him as a gentleman, a professional man, and the real acting trustee for her daughter; and though, when they began their gossip, it had not been in her mind to speak of the gift Mr. Tindal had made to Pennie, it slipped out along with other details of his residence at Mayfield; and to Mr. Hargrove's understanding, it appeared the most important and significant of all. He put on it, in fact, the interpretation that Mr. Tindal meant to secure Mr. Wynyard's wealthy ward for his wife, but so far was he from assigning the desire to its true cause, that he attributed it entirely to her money, and said to himself that it must be his business to circumvent it.

He began at once by cautiously and skilfully

undermining that slight little structure of revised opinion which Pennie had prevailed with her mother to build up on the old storied foundation of Mr. Tindal's life. He reverted to his brother's mysterious death, and declared that he was as certain Arthur Tindal was the assassin as if he had seen him point the gun that killed him. He dipt into the well of stagnant gossip and lies about that tragedy, and brought up a bucketful of slimy weeds and rottenness, which he poured out slowly before Mrs. Croft's memory, until she was ready to affirm, like him, that there must be some truth at the bottom of this foul deposit, if only they could fish it up.

"I'll not go to Rood to-morrow, nor I won't let her go," was the conclusion she promptly brought her fears to; and then she confessed to Mr. Hargrove how she had promised to stay and lunch at the Abbey with her daughter as she carried her back to Eastwold.

"Stay and lunch at the Abbey!" echoed the lawyer softly and awfully; "why, my good friend, it would be the dale's talk. You did your Samaritan's duty in taking him in here, and taking care of him until he was well, and he has endeavoured to acquit

himself of the obligation, and there I should advise you to let the intimacy drop. As for associating with him familiarly, while he lies under such a ban as that of imputed murder, you really must not think of it."

Mr. Hargrove appeared so shocked at the notion that for several minutes he could speak of nothing else; and this was the theme he and the widow were upon, when Pennie—all unwitting of the disappointment in store for her—presented herself at tea. Her mother looked conscious, the lawyer very serious. Conversation was at a halt for some time, but the clink of the urn, the teapot, and cups, covered the silence until Mrs. Croft inquired who was at church. "Only the school-children, a few old people, Mrs. Featherston and Mr. Tindal," Pennie replied.

"Mr. Tindal at church!" cried Mr. Hargrove, in mocking amazement. "Trying the devotional dodge—very astute, very clever, I must say."

Pennie set a watch on her lips; it was not for her to undertake Mr. Tindal's defence against this *odious man*, as in her own mind she called the agent, but she could not control the indignant wave of

colour that flushed into her face. It was not lost on him; it gave him the measure of her sentiments, but by no means of her character and her powers. These he underrated, having a general contempt for all women. He tried her with a little rallying next.

"You are like your cousin Lucy, Miss Penelope: because Mr. Tindal's a fine-looking gentleman, and has a pleasant way with him, when he gets black dog Care off his back for an hour, she takes him for a persecuted saint, and would fall down and worship him, if he'd only show that it would be agreeable." Pennie did not like the implication, but she still held her peace. Mr. Hargrove threw a strain of malignity into his probing speech to finish with. "Fools fancy a rogue with a slink, a furtive eye, and a wheedling whine, but the real rogues that carry a real fox gnawing at 'em under their cloaks, put on a jolly grin, and have a jest at their tongue's end. It is the rogue who is best at shamming innocence we should be most on our guard against, Miss Penelope, or we are robbed before we know where we are."

"Are you quoting Jacques the grazier?" said

Penelope—not without point. She had heard that burly personage deliver himself of a similar sentiment to her mother, and it was to Hargrove, on Mr. Wynyard's affairs, he was covertly alluding.

The lawyer stared uneasily: "What do you know of Jacques the grazier?" asked he.

"Poor fellow, he was opening up his troubles about his money to me when he brought over the Alderney," interposed Mrs. Croft. "Set a man talking of his troubles, and he'll go on for all evers. How *is* business prospering in Arkindale, sir, if it isn't a liberty to ask? Is there a prospect of Mr. Wynyard's coming back to Eastwold?"

"Not at present, I fear, not at present:" the lawyer took refuge in a solicitous air, and refrained from provoking any more double-edged questions from Pennie. He discerned in that one with which she had favoured him a shrewdness, fearlessness, and directness of character extremely hard to deceive or to manage. He discerned also that she had got a theory of himself into her mind, possibly truer to the fact than was convenient, which she was endeavouring to match with his moralities, and his popular repute as

gathered from Jacques the grazier. He relished neither her scrutiny nor her sarcasm, but he felt it was good he should be aware—however unwelcome the discovery—that there lived at Eastwold a familiar who distrusted him, and who would not be afraid of showing her distrust. The subject of Arkindale was evaded, and shortly after tea he took his departure, to Pennie's exceeding relief.

Mrs. Croft did not announce that she had changed her mind about staying to lunch at Rood Abbey until the following morning at breakfast, and the shock was so wholly unexpected that Pennie could not conceal her wrath and disappointment. Angry tears flashed into her eyes, and she said almost with a sob that it was very unkind, and what right had Mr. Hargrove to speak of Mr. Tindal as he did? She was sure he had influenced her mother to refuse her this last pleasure of her visit. Mrs. Croft could be irate as well as her daughter.

"Is that the way to talk to me, Penelope? You're not to judge of what's proper and what's not proper. I won't have you get no friendlier with

Mr. Tindal; and if you say another word, I'll make you send back that keepsake-ring he gave you."

Admonished in this strain, Pennie did not say another word. Love and confidence shrunk up wounded into a corner of her heart, and the widow, as soon as her passion was past, discerned with compunction that she had done more harm than good. Yet her next words did not mend matters. "If Mr. Hargrove did give me a warning, it is no more than what he's bound to do. Where is Mr. Wynyard that your father put you under care of, and what heed does Dr. Grey pay to your bringing-up? If you'd been left to me and your uncle Lister to manage, there'd ha' been far more sense in it, and you'd not be setting yourself up now to know what's right better nor your mother."

This was the style in which Mrs. Lister rated Joanna and Lucy; it is needless to say that Pennie was not used to it, and that she cowered under it with as much shame and dismay as if she had been threatened with physical chastisement. The widow was hardly aware of the extent of the mischief she was doing with her rough words, which she would

forget before the morning was over, but which Pennie would feel sorely for many a long day. The mother even fancied that she was performing a maternal duty—"teaching her gel to know herself," as she would have expressed it, but, in fact, she was only teaching her reserve. The tears stole down Pennie's cheeks, and she rubbed them off furtively, quivering through all her body, but saying nothing; and, when breakfast was over, she went out into the garden, and had a good cry by herself.

She wished this had not happened on her last day at home. She knew her mother's warm temper was apt to break out now and again on the offending head of Bessie or of Ned, but she never recollected being called on herself to bear the brunt of it before. And then the disappointment about going to the Abbey, which she knew would be as great to Mr. Tindal as to her — and it might be ever so long before she saw him again. At this thought her tears gushed anew. Mrs. Croft was not much less miserable than she had made her daughter. To be sure, she had no tender reasons for wishing to eat her luncheon at Rood Abbey instead of at home, but

she was vext at herself for having grieved Pennie, and she was afraid it might affect their future intercourse. Pennie, as she remembered of old, had always taken a small reproach acutely to heart, and as a child had been shy and timid for a week after the lightest *scufting*. If she turned shy and timid now, it might end in her not coming to Mayfield again in haying-time. Indeed, without intending, without knowing it, her mother had taken away in an instant from Mayfield its chiefest charm. And regret would not restore it.

Pennie made the first advance towards peace. She came to the kitchen door where her mother was, and asked if a note ought not to be sent to Mr. Tindal to tell him they were not going to the Abbey.

"What a fuss you do make about it, Pennie," said her mother who stuck to her main resolution, and thought it due to herself to maintain her dignity. "He'll expect no note, not he; it isn't like as if it was a party. I'll not have any writing backwards and forwards between you. *That* would be worse than the other." Almost before she had done speaking, Pennie had withdrawn herself to the

parlour, and was crying again more bitterly than ever. She did not wear tears near her eyes, but when the deep fountains were opened, they flowed copiously.

While Pennie was bewailing herself thus at Mayfield, Mr. Tindal, in anticipation of her speedy arrival, was going about with a cheerful countenance, putting the final touches of embellishment to his sanctum in which he proposed to receive her. How often had she gathered violets and garnished her rustic parlour for him! He remembered with grateful tenderness, her thousand delicate little efforts to please his eye, and lighten the tedium of his confinement, and he thought that she should see he had not been unobservant of her whims and her tastes. With his own fingers, less deft than hers, but far from incapable, he filled a cup on his writing-table with wet long-fronded moss, and stuck it thick with double violets. From the neglected green-house, Pierce brought in a stand of plants in blossom, cinerarias of every shade of purple, heaths, rosy pink and white, and a tall

full-flowered crimson camellia in the centre, which made a rich glowing mass of colour in the wide, deep window.

The room had the morning sun, and was spacious and airy, with a soft, many-hued Persian carpet, green silk draperies, and antique furniture of dark walnut wood, wrought all of it, according to the traditions of the house, from the original carvings, panellings, and plenishing of the Abbey. The pictures on the walls were landscapes, every one, and most of them were sunny scenes. Over the mantel-piece, which was lofty and sculptured of wood like the book-cases and cabinets, there was an Italian view of a lake and mountains—blue, golden and glorious. Mr. Tindal had chosen this room for his own on his return, feeling his need of all things bright; and as he made it festive for his expected guest, he glanced round it approvingly, and said to himself—Yes, she would like it. It had been his mother's drawing-room, and should be hers. So confident was he of the balance of that cup to which he was approaching his thirsty lips.

The clock went round to three quarters of an

hour past noon, and then he began to count the minutes until she came. He had to count them a long while, but he did not give up *expecting* until Pierce entered and said, Miss Croft had ridden by with her mother. Then there was an end of it. The afternoon was half over, the sun had faded out of the room, and he went to his savourless meal alone. It was not *her* fault, he was sure, but he experienced a sense of pain and dejection far beyond the ordinary sense of disappointment; and for the whole of that day he could not raise himself above it. He tried writing, he tried a book, he tried his pipe—*that* consoled him best; his familiar friend that moralized in smoke, and was never weariful.

IX.

ABOUT RINGS.

It was the Easter holidays when Penelope Croft returned to Eastwold, and the Wynyard boys were all at home. The household were glad to see her back, for she was wont to be a merry little soul, and they had need of all the life and gaiety and hopefulness that she could bring. For Pennie to look sad was, therefore, nothing short of a calamity; and sad she did look, with traces of tears and temper on her face that did not vanish until she had enjoyed a sound night's rest in her own room. Her trouble was not precisely of that sort which murders sleep, and in the morning its proportions were so far diminished that it slipped every now and then out of the grip of her imagination, and left her to think of something else. She was more like herself again, though still not quite right.

During the weeks of her absence, Farmer Dykes, his wife and family, had taken possession of the portion of the house assigned to them, and Mrs. Wynyard and her children had worn down to the tranquil level of their daily life. Nobody came to visit—that was the first fact that impressed itself on Pennie's mind. The gardens were left to grow into wilderness. Sheep and cattle pastured in the park. The few fine trees that had hitherto been spared for beauty's sake, were now marked for the axe. The faded splendour of the drawing-room, and the learned luxury of the library remained to keep tastes and traditions alive in the children's minds; but the regular expenditure of the household was reduced to the narrowest limits, and besides old Jenny the nurse, one maid and a woman in the kitchen, were all that remained of the former establishment.

Mrs. Wynyard had many disquieting thoughts about her husband's ward under these circumstances. It was not to such a dull, restrained life as was now led at Eastwold that her father had meant to consign her; and her fortune certainly entitled her to taste something of the pleasures of the world while

her mind was fresh. A season in London, a continental tour were her due; but how were they to be obtained for her? Her allowance was ample for all expenses; but where was the chaperone to escort her? Mrs. Wynyard caught herself wishing that poor Pennie were well married and off her hands; and then thinking that perhaps she might meet with an eligible somebody at Brackenfield, during the wedding festivities of Millicent and Mr. Forester. This marriage, long deferred, was to be celebrated on the last day of April.

Meantime, Pennie took up the threads of her own life quietly and contentedly enough. She walked with Anna and Lois about the park, the fields, the woods; she rode a few miles every day with Francis or Geoffrey, who borrowed a shaggy half-broken colt from Farmer Dykes to accompany her; and she spent a great many hours in the library, browsing at will amongst the literary gleanings of a dozen generations. She was blessed with an adaptable mind, and she did not find this uneventful existence insupportably heavy. Perhaps her patience was increased by the reflection that Rood Abbey was not

much more than four miles off, and that she might happen some fortunate day to meet Mr. Tindal. This fortunate day did not, however, arrive, and she departed to Brackenfield without an opportunity of explanation. Pennie respected her mother's *veto* so far that she did not dream of making an opportunity. She had meditated once or twice on the expediency of opening her counsel to Mrs. Wynyard, but recollecting what had come of her confidence at Mayfield, she was afraid, and finally determined to keep it to herself. Besides what was there to tell, except that Mr. Tindal had given her that ring?

Pennie arrived at Brackenfield two days before the great event by Millicent Hutton's express desire. No other guest had then come, but on the morrow appeared Sir Thomas and Lady Brooke, and Pennie found herself brought into close and intimate communion with Mr. Tindal's faithless love, who was, in fact, a niece of the dame—herself, before marriage, a Curtis of Methley Towers. Pennie was not shy in company; she felt her personal insignificance as a shield, and under its shelter, she gleaned from society

a vast deal of quiet enjoyment. Lady Brooke, who fastened a character on all her acquaintance, told her on the evening of their meeting that she was a *quiz*, and to the other familiar names by which she was known at Brackenfield this was now added. Pennie felt inclined to resent it, but did not; Uncle Christopher was there with his merry mockery, and her new weapon might be turned to account.

It was in the drawing-room after dinner that this occurred. Millicent and Michael Forester were conversing apart; the rest of the circle were assembled about the hearth drinking their cups of coffee. Lady Brooke covered the central ottoman with her flowing skirts, and was as useful as a second lamp for lighting up the room with her glowing complexion and mountainous white figure. Anything so fat, or anything so fair, Pennie had never seen, and her great eyes lightened with appreciative fun as she contemplated this heroine of a story, seated solid under the nimbus of airs, graces and affectations with which she was always pleased to crown herself in company. Pennie tried mentally to reduce her shape to girlish proportions, and her visage to the tender roundness

and bloom of youth, but all to no purpose. Fancy can expand more easily than she can compress, and a faint sentiment of wonder, unleavened by admiration, was all she felt towards this once paragon of beauty that Mr. Tindal had loved.

Pennie was reposing in a low chair very comfortably, sipping her coffee and thinking her thoughts, when Mrs. Blake who was close by on a couch with the dame, suddenly bent forward, and said aloud: "What an exquisite old diamond ring you have on, Pennie!" Pennie coloured, murmured yes, and went on sipping her coffee.

"Pray let me look at it; I do *so* admire diamonds," cried Lady Brooke eagerly. Pennie had nothing for it but to extend her hand; the ring was rather large for her finger, and in an instant the admirer of diamonds had drawn it off, had shrieked for love of the precious stones, had read the "posie" engraved inside, and had said in a voice that made everybody stare, she did not think there had been more than one ring like that in the world! Pennie put out her hand to receive it again, but somebody else had asked to look at it, and it was being passed

from one to another, and commented on as curious, costly, quaint, lovely, antique. When it came back to her she put it on without a word, and proceeded to finish her coffee, but the hand that carried the cup to her lips shook visibly, the lips themselves quivered, and a burning glow, enough to melt ice, covered her face, her neck, her arms. Poor Pennie, she could not have looked guiltier if she had stolen the ring!

Mr. Tindal's accident, and his nursing at Mayfield during Pennie's visit to her mother, were well-known here, for they had been the chief theme of Pennie's recent letters to her friend Millicent. Blushes so fiery must, of course, have an interpretation. The women longed to know *what;* the men had no doubt. They retreated very slowly, and Pennie writhed under the sensation of being a mark, and a wonder to all eyes. She quite loved Uncle Christopher when, after turning over the leaves of a volume of Cuitt's beautiful etchings, he wheeled his chair half round to hers, and bade her come and look at them too; which gave her a chance of moving from under Lady Brooke's discontented watchfulness, and of

concealing her treacherous face. She did not discern the pictures very distinctly until they came to one of the gateway at Rood Abbey; and then rallying her wits with determination, she remarked that it was a fine fragment, but that it appeared in better preservation in the etching than in reality. After she had managed her own voice once more, she got on better, and really finished the evening creditably. But, oh, what would she not have given for one of those faces, good as masks, which never betray their owners!

Millicent Hutton's wedding was not very gay, but it went off in a highly satisfactory manner. She was a handsome, happy bride, and Michael Forester had recovered to some extent the natural colour and air of a wholesome English gentleman. During his long absence he had gone through a century of adventures; had been a hunter in the wild woods, a prisoner, a fugitive, a slave, where the voices around him had no more significance than the cry of animals, and the manners and customs were worse than those of animals. So many days, so many

weeks, so many months, so many years wandering amongst the savage tribes of central Africa, until he lost all reckoning of time, and was found by two adventurous travellers—pioneers of commerce and Christianity—so levelled to his lonely existence, that he had not energy left to endeavour an escape from it. They took him away with them, nursed him at the mission-house on the coast, and shipped him home to England—to take up again the broken strands of his life and his love, and to weave them into the orthodox, every-day pattern. That was the conclusion of Millicent's caprice.

The breakfast, the tedious afternoon, the dinner and the dance in the evening, were all according to rule,—pleasant, natural, proper, and pretty. The Squire and the dame bore the parting bravely; in the first place because Millicent was to live at the Lodge, and in the second, because John, Theodora, and the three boys were going now to take up their abode at Brackenfield, that grandpapa and grandmamma might not feel lonely and forsaken in their old age.

Nobody had come to the wedding from Eastwold but Pennie, and the next day but one after it was

over, she left to return home, still in possession of her secret about the ring, notwithstanding the many attacks made upon her by Lady Brooke's curiosity to learn under what circumstances it had been given to her. None of the other witnesses of her confusion had asked or even hinted a single inquiry, for Lady Brooke had whispered it through the house that this wonderful ring had certainly been worn by Mr. Tindal's mother; that she had seen it often on her hand, and that the unhappy lady had said to her once (before the shocking family tragedy occurred), that it might come to be her own; for it had been the betrothal gift of the heir of Rood Abbey to his mistress for generations. Pennie had dreaded lest she might be made the object of Uncle Christopher's teasing; but he showed no sign of remembering her rosy confession when it was past, neither did any one else. On the contrary, she was treated with more observance and respect, and she liked the change: for she had grown shy of comments on her peculiarities since she had taken on her the *status* of a come-out young woman. Besides, she was beginning now to consider and cultivate them,

and even to turn them to account as attractions; in which study she had that wise guide, Love.

But though nothing was said to Pennie, there was a good deal said over dressing-room fires about the ring, and in other secluded corners for gossip. The dame trusted that her Mary knew, and that Pennie put confidence in her; and in a letter she wrote to her daughter at Eastwold the day after the wedding, she made distinct allusion to her ward's intimacy with the unfortunate master of Rood. This letter only preceded Pennie's arrival by a few hours, and by the same post had come another on the same subject from Mr. Wynyard in Normandy, to whom Mr. Hargrove had sent a curiously exaggerated statement of the late events at Mayfield. Mrs. Wynyard felt hurt that Pennie had told her nothing, and that such intelligence should have been left to find its way to her from two such distant quarters, but she carefully dissembled her annoyance; for she had knowledge enough of Pennie's character to be aware that though her confidence might be won, it never could be commanded.

It was to this position of her little affairs that

Pennie came home—far from sorry to come; for how much nearer to Rood was Eastwold than Brackenfield? As she sat at tea with the children, giving them a detailed account of the late festivities at grandpapa's house, Mrs. Wynyard observed that the ring which had been reported to her was not on her hand. Pennie had, in fact, resolved not to risk any more abrupt questions thereanent, and so she had strung it on a ribbon round her neck, and hidden it underneath her dress.

It was not thus, however, that she could escape Mrs. Wynyard's dutiful anxiety. When the children were gone to bed, she was left alone with their mother, who plunged at once *in medias res*, and asked,—"Pennie, what is this that I hear about your having accepted from Mr. Tindal a diamond ring—the ring that all the world of hereabouts knows as the bride-ring of Rood?"

"I told my mother, and she told it again to Mr. Hargrove," replied Pennie, in a defensive tone, as much as to say, "If my own mother cannot keep my counsel, to whom then shall I entrust it?"

"Mr. Hargrove has made it his business to write

about it to Normandy. Of course, on such a gift, men place only one construction." Mrs. Wynyard waited a moment for confession, but none was forthcoming. She continued: "If all were straight and fair in Mr. Tindal's history, there could be no objection, unless it were on the score of age—he must be fourteen or fifteen years your elder—but there *are* circumstances which would make us very, *very* reluctant to consent."

"No one is required to consent to anything," interrupted Pennie, in some heat. "I know the circumstances you allude to, and they will never influence the opinion I had formed of Mr. Tindal before I knew them. I will not pretend to misunderstand you. When he gave me this ring," touching the bosom of her dress, "he told me that he had received it from his mother, to give to the woman he married; but as he could not ask any woman to be his wife, tied and bound as he is, he would give it to me—the only creature who had shown him genuine faith and love since he lost her."

"It comes all to the same thing, Pennie. He

will look that you should redeem the pledge you have accepted."

Pennie did not appear so distressed as she ought to have done. She was thinking, "Well, and if he does, what then?"

"This is where it is, dear; *we* are responsible for you," Mrs. Wynyard went on. "We should like to marry you honourably and happily, as if you were a daughter of our own; and I would rather lay my girls in their coffins than give them to men of whom such words have been spoken as have been spoken of Arthur Tindal. While you keep that ring, you are virtually bound to him, and cannot honestly listen to the addresses of any one besides."

Pennie's face flamed now. "I don't want to listen to any one besides," said she.

"I must understand you plainly. Do you mean to tell me that you have conceived a regard for Mr. Tindal, which would be a bar against any other attachment?"

"That is the truth."

"Then I am sorry to hear it, Pennie; for I am afraid there is trouble before you."

For all that prediction, Pennie went to her pillow comforted rather than dejected. If the ring was a fetter, it was a fetter from which she had no wish to be free. She did not regret that Mrs. Wynyard knew her heart; there was no fear that the itch for gossip would tempt *her* to a betrayal of confidence; and since Mr. Hargrove had taken upon him to write to Normandy about her, it was better that her guardian should learn the precise truth from his wife, than that he should accept a garbled story from the person who had been able already to make her taste one sharp disappointment. It was curious that, whenever from that day Pennie fell into a muse on her private affairs, the burly agent invariably intruded as a meddler, a mischief-maker, a stone of offence in her way—yet why should *he?* What was it to him *who* or *how* she married, or *when* or *where?*

If Mr. Hargrove had not entertained so profoundly careless a contempt for women, he would have been very uneasy to know that Mr. Wynyard's Ward had begun to ask herself, what her marriage could be to *him?*

X.

DOCTOR GREY BEGINS TO SEE HIS DUTY.

Every day and often twice a day Dr. Grey visited his patients in the parish poor-house. The child died, and was buried. The mother continued much the same; now *high*—prating, laughing, babbling; now *low*—weeping, silent, dejected. Each morning news of her was carried to Rood, to her father and Mr. Tindal. The latter was growing hourly more impatient for the disclosures that he looked to, to deliver himself, while Pierce with a strange fatuity was retiring on his old doubts and dreads, and repeating over and over again to himself, to the doctor, and even to his master, that it was not a *certain* thing his Alice was the guilty person. *He* did not *know* she was. He might have *feared;* he would not deny any longer that she was at Rood that

fatal day, but more he could not say. Was it for him to condemn his own flesh and blood? If they put it to him on his conscience, he did *not* believe that it was in her ever to do such a deed; *no*, not for jealousy, nor for revenge.

"Don't talk to me, Pierce, there is a moral certainty that she did it," cried the doctor, in a rage.

"People said there was a moral certainty Mr. Arthur did it; but moral certainties don't stand for proofs. I go back to my former ground, sir—I don't know *who* murdered Mr. Hugh Tindal, and I don't *want* to know."

"You have been taking counsel with somebody besides yourself—*that* is the way in which you damned your *master*."

"I won't deceive you, sir; I have been consulting Mr. Hargrove. He knows the law, he knows what is evidence, and what isn't evidence, and he says he sees no sound reason at present for reversing the popular verdict."

"Mr. Hargrove ought to have more sense than to talk about popular verdicts. However, if you have opened the business to him, it might as well be

opened to all the world. You had better go and see Alice; I shall name her to the matron. The guardians meet to-morrow, and you will have to remove her."

With that the doctor drove off, saying to himself that whatever chance publicity would give Mr. Tindal, he should not lack it. He went straight to the poor-house, and saw Alice, who was, as he believed, drifting into the outer darkness of insanity, where anguish could no more reach her. To screen her longer, would be a sacrificing of the living to the dead. The matron came at his call.

"This woman belongs to Rood, to decent people there," said he. "I have let her father know the state in which she is—Mr. Pierce, a servant at the Abbey. In all probability you will have him over. If he wishes to take her away—which most likely he will—it ought to be only to an asylum. I will sign her certificate, and so will Jackson, but he had better not be in any hurry."

In crossing the market-place, the doctor met the curate who had the spiritual care of the paupers at Allan Bridge, and to him also he made his statement.

"There is small hope of her recovery," he added, "if, indeed, it would be anything to hope for. It is a miserable story—that child you buried was Hugh Tindal's, and *she* was the undiscovered woman in the wood that day he was shot. Her father has known it from the first."

"You don't mean that *she*—I have always heard it charged on his brother," stammered the clergyman.

"Very unjustly, as *I* think." The doctor nodded, and went on his way, left his gig at his own door, and proceeded to the lawyer's office. Mr. Hargrove was engaged at the moment, but would be with him shortly, said his clerk; and the doctor, who had no patient watching for him, that he was aware of, sat down to wait.

"Well, Grey, is it your will, *this* time?" cried the lawyer boisterously, as he appeared after the lapse of about five minutes.

"No, Hargrove, it is not my will yet; it is that old story Pierce has been to you about from Rood." The lawyer immediately became serious, got behind his desk, took up a paper-knife, and composed himself to listen. A closer observer than Doctor

Grey might have discerned anxiety as well as attention in his countenance. "Did Pierce tell you his daughter is here, in the poor-house? No! I thought as much. Crafty old knave, that can't understand it is as necessary to be open with his man of law as his man of physic. She *is* here, at all events, and for what I can see, is likely to go to a worse place—Norminster Asylum, most probably."

Mr. Hargrove made an inarticulate noise expressive of surprise and commiseration.

"If Pierce did not tell you she was here, what case did he bring you? This is what mine turns on—she can't keep away from Rood. She has confessed to me that she *saw* Hugh Tindal shot; she was, therefore, that woman who was lurking about between the Grange and the Abbey, of whom there was some suspicion that she might have done it—now I'll undertake to say that if it had been known the woman was Alice Pierce, with her bundle of wrongs and miseries on her back, the suspicion would have become conviction in the common mind."

The lawyer thoughtfully put up his lip, and allowed that it might have become conviction in the

common mind, but protested that it would not have become conviction in his. "In fact," added he, with an air of candour, "my prejudice went from the first against Arthur Tindal, and it was very strong."

"I never heard you say so before," answered the doctor, aghast. "Never, and we have talked it over a score of times."

"And may talk of it a score to that again," said Hargrove.

"But my impression was that your opinion went all the other way!" persisted the doctor.

"Then your impression was mistaken." The lawyer was rather short, as if he disliked this insistance, and would put a stop to it; but his present client had an excellent memory, and declined to be stopped. He went on to quote instances in which Hargrove had agreed with him in the confidence of after-dinner chat, and had wished a happy release to the falsely accused, and a swift despatch to the assassin. "Ha! ha! after dinner over a bottle of your excellent port, Grey!" cried the lawyer, with a significant laugh — or a laugh meant to be significant.

"If a man tells lies in his wine, when does he tell truth?" growled the doctor, and got up to go.

Hargrove felt that he had blundered. He ought to have known his man better, and he *did* know him better; therefore that lapse was as unpardonable as it was unlucky; and Grey was not the man to forget it, as he was well aware. Already from the glance of his eye, and the knitting of his brow, he appeared to be speculating on its origin or its motive; and his speculations were apt to be shrewd, and to hit home. The lawyer endeavoured to detain him, and bring him back to the point, but in vain; the doctor was both angry and dismayed at the turn the consultation had taken, and he was not easily appeased. He walked out of the office, and across to his own house in a maze, and as he shut himself up in his study to think the matter over, he ejaculated under his breath, "He shall not put his legs under *my* table again in a hurry; I half think he *may* be the knave Jacques declares he *is*. He was lying when he talked about his prejudice, confound him!"

The doctor's discomfited meditations carried him about and about the subject, but not to the core of

it. He could not conjecture why Mr. Hargrove should desire—as he evidently did—to perpetuate the social outlawry of Mr. Tindal. Buckhurst was in at dinner-time, and he went over all the history with that young man, to take the benefit of his views.

"Never look deep for a rogue's motives—something personal, probably pecuniary, they'll be," moralized the assistant. "The least subtle explanation of men's ways generally comes nearest the truth." This oracular guide-post, though it only pointed, yet pointed decisively, and Doctor Grey, brightening up, said he thought he *saw* it.

"I'll turn over a new leaf of my trusteeship for little Penelope Croft," was the resolution that followed close on the thought. Suspicion, once generated in an unsuspicious mind, breeds fast. Last night Doctor Grey would have put his dearest interests with implicit faith in Hargrove's hands; to-night he revoked all his former confidence, and declared to himself that his old *convive* was a shifty, crafty, double-faced pettifogger of an attorney, who ought to be very sharply looked after. The pity was he had not discovered it before.

XI.

A VISITOR AT ROOD.

To such a place as Allan Bridge any little event is a godsend; but the re-opening of the famous Rood Abbey tragedy furnished talk for the whole county and country. The London papers reverted to it with tantalizing brevity, and it got into the *Norminster Gazette* at full length again. The Eskdale readers of that news followed the case with greedy interest. They heard the story of Alice Pierce from the days when she was "so winsome, so bonny," down to the hour when, the magistrates having seen her, and the doctors having certified to her insanity, she was removed by her afflicted father and a female keeper from the sick ward of Allan Bridge poor-house to the pauper lunatic asylum at Norminster. After occupying a column or two for seven or eight weeks, the

mystery was pronounced to be still unfathomed and unfathomable, and it subsided once more into uneasy oblivion.

In the magniloquent editorials, which furnished the patrons of the *Norminster Gazette* with opinions on its facts, Mr. Tindal had been very smartly handled. Forcible allusions were made to the cowardice, the unmanliness, of attempting to fix the barbarous crime on a woman, who was as incapable of defending herself as the dead. "The time was cunningly chosen," said the leader, "but truth had prevailed over cunning; the base plot had been defeated; and the burthen of suspicion lay where it had originally fallen—where it must continue to lie until some fuller disproof were offered than what had lately been brought under the investigation of the Allan Bridge board of magistrates."

The *Gazette* containing this article came to Rood Abbey on a Sunday morning in June, as it came to every other well-to-do house in Eskdale. Mr. Tindal read his condemnation in it, and a present end to all his dreams. He read it in the garden, and while he read it, he let his pipe go out. "That is over,"

said he, and dropped the paper on the grass; and for the first time a chill of utter despondency crept over him.

He had recovered his strength now, and his natural colour; but the torturing anxiety of the recent inquiries had not passed over him without making its mark. The sun shone with midsummer glow, but he felt no warmth in its shining. While hope was with him he had caused his house and gardens to be swept and garnished, and now on the soft turf there was spread a luxury of blossom and beauty that mocked him with a reminder of his short-lived joy. He had seen no friendly soul to speak to, except Doctor Grey, since the turn the investigation about Alice Pierce would take became apparent. While it was doubtful, here and there a man had drawn near to him, who had since drawn back again. Even Pierce had left him; not in anger on either side, but with mutual concession and sorrow. Early on in the inquiry he had spoken to the Vicar of his desire to restore the dreary, neglected old church, and had been checked, and bidden to stay until he was clear of the imputed guilt of

murder; for Mr. Featherston and his rosy wife were not found impenetrable to the subtle influence of public opinion, and each to the other had confessed a *doubt*, a *dread*—had whispered awfully that it was not fit a man with unrepented blood on his hands should bring any gift to the altar. He had felt the recoil in their promising acquaintance, and had come no more in their way. With many besides them, the stirring up of the stagnant pool had done him more harm than good. The lively girls at the Grange took heed not to cross his path; men meeting him in the road made only half obeisance; the servants under his own roof did him shy and grudging service.

He thought often of Pennie, and wondered, did she think of him? and if she thought, *how* did she think? It could only be with pain, at the best, he knew, even if her faith had escaped the common taint. Trust in her was the last stay left him. After perusing that oracular denunciation, he could not bring his mind into any sort of tune. He felt like a prisoner who, in trying to escape, falls and wounds himself cruelly, or who is crippled by a shot

from the sentry just as he gets a glimpse of freedom. He heard the solemn roll of the organ and the singing in church, as he had heard them in the spring, but with dull ears now, and an unresponsive soul, to which nothing spake peace. It seemed impossible that he could return to the vague, wandering life of the last seven years; it seemed equally impossible that he could remain at Rood, banned from society, friendless, and alone. He had not even Pierce to open his heart to now; and Doctor Grey's daily visits had been intermitted for some weeks. He rose in the morning without expectation, and he went to his restless rest at night weary of the tedium of the day, in which a newspaper, a book, and a pipe had been his sole company. Beyond this, he could discern no hope, unless in Pennie. Would she hold out to him a helping hand, or would she, like all the rest, avert her eyes, and pass him by on the other side.

What a long, blank day it was, that golden day of June, on which the *Norminster Gazette* announced to Eskdale the solemn renewal of the old fiat on his case. When the afternoon melted into evening,

and the evening mellowed into soft summer night, he thanked God that it was done, and groping in the darkness of his destiny, prayed that he might see light soon or die.

As that day was, so was the morrow, only so much the heavier as the chain dragged longer, and wore down his strength. He felt to have no power, no nerve left. He could not sleep or eat; wine could not warm, nor smoke solace him. He opened no book; he made no more effort to relieve the oppression of his misery. When Dr. Grey called, he could scarcely get from him a word. He avoided the face of his servants, and ceased to answer when they spoke. He sat indoors, and shut out the brightness of the day. It was as if there were death in the house.

The next morning it rained at intervals, but the merry splash and patter of the sudden showers on the thick leaves, and the fragrance of the sunshiny gleams between did not win him one moment from his brooding melancholy. After noon it cleared for good, but the tenderness of tears was in the sky, and the cool freshness of them was over all the fields.

He had seated himself mechanically before his writing-table in the window, but during all the hours of the day he had done nothing, and had attempted nothing. He had, in fact, no correspondence like other men, to while away time. Still he sat in the same place, vacant, nerveless, helpless, when about four o'clock, the man who had replaced Pierce opened the door and looked in. His master took no notice. It did not appear that he even heard, for he never moved. His arms were stretched across the table, his hands clasped, his head bent down on them, and his face hidden. He started however, and visibly, when a familiar voice, only a pace or two off, said shyly; "Mr. Tindal, I have come to see you."

It was Pennie—Pennie in splashed habit, with the soft glow rapid riding brought always into her cheeks, and the deep swimming lustre that air and exercise put into dark eyes quite as often as sentiment or emotion. She looked almost pretty under her hat—*he* thought she looked lovely. She did not speak again after those first words, nor did he for a minute, while he held her hands; both of them trembling, both of them with mist in their vision.

"You are my salvation, Pennie," he said at last, in a voice that he could not trust above his breath.

She was bewildered and confused by the strength of her own feelings; she had meant to say so many comforting, loving things, and behold she was dumb. After all it was the sight of her that was the consolation, and Mr. Tindal came to a command of himself first. He said something (she was never quite sure what) and she replied to it by explaining her visit: "Doctor Grey brought me, and he will call for me in about an hour on his way back from Beckby—Mr. Jones is ill of his rheumatic gout." Prosaic this, but a convenient bridge over the gulf of emotion that had almost swallowed up their power of speech. Mr. Tindal blessed Doctor Grey in his heart, and then they began to talk, not very fluently, as regarded Pennie, for her sensations of shyness, sorrow, and sympathy were perpetually in her way, but very effectively as regarded him she came to comfort.

"You still keep your faith in me, Pennie?" said he.

"Yes; and I shall keep it always, though nothing should ever be made clearer than it is to-day."

"Then I shall live and not die!—my good little nurse! my good little nurse that I love, and who loves me—it is so, Pennie. I *know* it is, but I want to hear it from your lips, one sweet, one tender word after so many hard blows."

She gave it him, and a few tears with it—for his passion frightened her—and then a bit of counsel.

"You should not stay here alone. Look up as you did before, and hope for good days by-and-by."

"Ah! Pennie, these things take the strength out of a man at last, and leave him without energy or power to hope."

"Don't let them beat you, *don't*."

There was short silence. Pennie was a child in experience, if she was a woman in sympathy. She could not conceive of what his life really was—how dull, how bare, how utterly denuded of the interests, occupations, pleasures, and cares of common humanity. Her idea of him was of a virtuous man persecuted, whose innocent conscience ought to set

him above the clamour and unjust condemnation of a cruel world. She loved him, and she would have liked to show the world how little she valued its opinion by standing by him in his isolation. That sort of sacrifice at which her soul would have kindled had she read it recorded as a golden deed in story, she was herself capable of making and of esteeming no sacrifice at all.

"I meant to stay at Rood, though it were in hermit fashion. I had begun to lay plans of restoring the church, building a school, and some new cottages—all in the air. I had almost persuaded myself into a belief that I might live down my bad name, and make it fragrant by good deeds." Mr. Tindal spoke with a sad, wistful smile. "For a few days past I have been asking, *is* there a just God that judges the earth, or is there only a random providence that lets its machinery get out of gear, and fall upon mischief, as our governing powers do here below?"

Pennie sighed. "If you *do* stay at Rood I shall see you sometimes, and Dr. Grey is your friend; but it would not be the best plan. You *must* break

away from yourself when you are moving about, seeing fresh places and faces."

"If I could only carry you with me, Pennie, then I should be glad to go!"

"I should like it too, but I am not my own mistress," said she naïvely.

"My dear little Pennie, that you never will be! Have not I a lien on your love, when your guardian gives you your release? Do you wear my ring?" Mrs. Wynyard was right then!

"*Here*. Not on my hand, where you put it, because it is so curious and beautiful that at Brackenfield it was recognized. But if you would like me to wear it openly, I will."

"Have the courage, my darling. I am disposed to think, Pennie, you may infect others with your own faith, and that I may win back peace and honour by means of you; though I know the common sentiment will be that I have done wickedly and selfishly in binding you to me while I am what I am. You will have to hear stinging things said of me."

"I shall not listen to them. No one will speak

to me unkindly of you twice." As Pennie said this her mouth closed with the unconscious resolution that characterized her, and the softness of her eyes became a cold brightness. Both coldness and firmness vanished the next moment, there being no present need of them, and she spake comfortably again. "If you go away, you will write me a long, *long* letter—and first you will come to Eastwold to say good-by."

"May I come to Eastwold?—doors don't open hospitably for me, Pennie. Ah! child, you don't know!"

"If you may not come to Eastwold, Doctor Grey will bring me again to Rood. He and I believe in you, and we shall not follow any one's lead who doubts. It would be worse to know you innocent, and act as if we thought you guilty, than to condemn you outright —it would be cowardly too, and I hate a coward!" Pennie grew quite vehement. She did hate a coward. She had a strong natural repulsion for meanness, baseness. If the choice had been put before her, she would rather have been stoned by the whole of her little world for sticking to Mr. Tindal, than she would

have endured an hour of her own self-contempt for denying and forsaking her love.

It seemed but a very short hour before Doctor Grey appeared. "I trust you will never say again that my advice does you no good, Tindal," said he, coming forward to the window in which the host and guest were. He then without waiting for reply, glanced from table to table, and added,—"Have you not given her a cup of tea or coffee after her ride? Have you entertained her with dry conversation all this while? See if I bring my ward to *this* house again of an afternoon!" Mr. Tindal rang the bell, asking Pennie which it should be—tea or coffee?

"Dr. Grey speaks more for himself than for me. He likes kettle-drum—coffee, please, we both prefer it," said Pennie.

For twenty minutes longer they were quite a pleasant, cheerful little group in the beautiful Abbey drawing-room. A stranger entering unawares would not have discerned amongst them the shadow of any special trouble. Pennie already knew Mr. Tindal's turn for the minor social amenities, she thought again now that he would be very happy to live with, for

though his face was haggard and lean, his countenance had cleared, and the dull despondency had left his voice. Misery had not effected a permanent settlement on him; despair had taken no firm grip of his heart and brain. If the outer wall of his prison were breached speedily, he would come forth of it able and eager to enjoy the sun, and do a fair day's work in the world still. At last, the doctor said it was time to go, and on the plea of seeing that Pennie's pony was all right and ready for her, he left them to make their farewells alone.

"You will answer me when I write, Pennie?" said Mr. Tindal holding her hands as she stood up to depart.

"Surely I will. No one need forbid me. I shall tell Mrs. Wynward, of course."

"That is right. Give her your confidence—live openly. *Must* you go, Pennie?" She only answered him with her eyes, and he answered her again as the happiest of lovers might. Doctor Grey inquired from a remote part of the hall if Pennie was not coming, and the next moment she came, and Mr. Tindal with her.

He gave her a hand up on her pony, straightened her habit, and was rather long; but even these little cares could not be spun out beyond a minute or two under the wooden regard of Pierce's successor, and the impatience of the doctor's horse. He walked beside her, his hand on the bridle, to the great gateway, and then let her go; waiting to see if she would look back, at a turn the road made twenty paces off or so. Yes, she looked back; and then he went round to the garden, and lit a cigar to help him to enjoy the recollection and the wholesome immediate results of her visit.

Doctor Grey provoked Pennie to a gallop as soon as they were out of sight of the Abbey. "Come, Miss Penelope, I have given you more time than was your due; you did not use it ill, but you must make up for it by riding fast. I hope you are contented now that you have had your own way, and have seen Mr. Tindal for yourself!" Pennie expressed herself as entirely satisfied, and as very grateful to her second guardian, whom hitherto she had hardly known except as a purveyor of draughts, powders, and other detestable compounds.

It was a lovely ride to Allan Bridge, where the doctor made her over to Francis Wynyard, who had come thus far to meet her; and while waiting at the surgery had been entertained by Mr. Buckhurst with some serious jokes on natural history, which had profoundly puzzled his young wits. His musing over these novelties, presented to him as interesting facts not generally known, kept him silent, which Pennie could not regret; for she, too, wished to think over the event of the afternoon, and to consider its possible consequences.

It had been made with the knowledge, but hardly with the consent of Mrs. Wynyard. Indeed that poor lady, whose decision of manner much trouble had weakened, was becoming sorely perplexed and distressed by the difficulty of managing her husband's young ward. Mild advice and gentle reasoning had failed to convince Pennie of her folly, and Mrs. Wynyard was not prepared to appeal to severe argument or to authority. During Pennie's absence that afternoon Mr. Hargrove had been at Eastwold on business, and when told whither she was gone, and with whom, had expressed the strongest disapproval,

and had designated Dr. Grey, "a pretty trustee, indeed, for an heiress." At these words Mrs. Wynyard felt, for a moment, as if her cares were becoming a burden too heavy to be borne. She had received a dismal melancholy letter from Normandy in the morning; it was the Midsummer holidays, and the two younger boys were distracting for noise and tearing their clothes; Anna was out-growing her strength; Lois was wilful and passionate by fits; old Jenny was over-worked; and here was Penelope Croft, worse than all, obstinately running counter to every propriety, and, backed by one guardian, setting herself in steady opposition to the opinion of the other, and of all the rest of the world.

To Mrs. Wynyard thus depressed, Pennie came home, herself in chastened mood, fitter for cheering than aught else. Notwithstanding her romance, she felt the roads of life thorny to her feet, and saw the roses promised to bloom but sparsely. "I'm very tired," said she to Anna at the door, and went straight up to her room. She was more of a woman, more serious, reflective, and sad, away from Mr. Tindal, than it was possible for her to be in the

half confusion, half exaltation, of feeling occasioned by his presence. When she had taken off her habit, she took off also the ribbon round her neck, by which his ring was suspended, and put it on her hand again, murmuring over to herself in prayerful spirit as she did so, its quaint posy—"God send me well to keep! God send me well to keep!"

Lois came presently to call her down to tea, and after the healthy racket of it, while the children went out to play, Mrs. Wynyard invited her to speak of her visit by silently taking up her hand, and looking at the ring.

"You understand what it means?" said Pennie, softly. "It means that I don't care who knows now that I love Mr. Tindal, and that I shall be his wife some day—if I were my own mistress it should be now."

"You speak out, Pennie. Perhaps it is happy for you that you cannot carry your pity at once into practice. I do not doubt that you have a strong feeling for Mr. Tindal, for the circumstances of your acquaintance were quite such as favour the growth of a youthful passion; but, when you see a little

more of men and of society, you will find there are others pleasant as well as he, though they may lack the charm of a great calamity."

Mrs. Wynyard did not mean to be sarcastic. She hit on that vein unawares, but Pennie winced at the touch of irony, and made no answer. She had resolved that the fact of her wearing that ring must be testimony enough of sentiment that deserved to be respected, and that as far as mortal patience would endure, she ought to bear without retort every insinuation and every attack made on her because of the giver. She began by airing her little stern dignity on anxious, heart-aching Mrs. Wynyard, and it proved quite effectual. That distressed lady had no desire to wound her, no desire in the world, on her behalf, but that she might be good and happy. Perceiving that she had somehow spoken amiss, she judged it wise to let the subject drop, and only said further, "You shall write to Mr. Wynyard yourself, Pennie dear. You will be able to put your views in a fairer light than I could possibly do;" and then she left her, and went out on the terrace before the house where her own children were at play.

Pennie had no fear of her absent guardian, but when she thought of the revelation that must be made to her mother, her heart was like to fail her. It was already made if she had but known. Mr. Hargrove had carried the intelligence he had gleaned at Eastwold straight to Mayfield; and the widow, amidst her anger, had melted into tears to think that her daughter could have ridden to Rood, within a mile of home, without coming on to see her. She ascribed the neglect, not to the difficulty Pennie must have had in cutting short her visit of Christian consolation to one in misery, but to the few words they had had in the spring; and, full of this fear, as soon as the lawyer was gone, she took her pen and paper, and wrote off a letter to Eastwold, very tender, remorseful, and slightly incoherent, which she sent over in the morning by a special messenger.

It came to Pennie's hand before breakfast, and drew a few tears to her eyes. They had begun to cut the grass in the low meadows, it said, and was she not going over for a week? She was not to think any more of those sharp words about her ring —it was only her mother's way, and who loved her

better? She had heard of her being at the Abbey, and thought it strange. Pennie must remember she *was* her mother, and a duty was laid on her to speak, if she saw her going wrong. Finally she was to write by the messenger when she would go to Mayfield—the sooner the better.

Pennie appeared at the breakfast-table with this document in her hand, and laid it before Mrs. Wynyard, who asked her what she wished to do. Pennie said she wished to go. That was couclusive. Mrs. Wynyard had taken counsel with herself, and had decided that it would be safest not to thwart Pennie, at present, with any obvious contradiction, lest she should be driven to some sudden and irretrievable step. She went to Mayfield the next day.

XII.

A FAREWELL.

When Doctor Grey bethought him that it was his duty to take an active interest in the affairs of Penelope Croft, he was rather puzzled where to begin. While the renewed investigation into the Rood tragedy was in progress he remained passive; but when it was over he wrote to his co-trustee, Mr. Wynyard, and gave his version of the attachment that had arisen between Mr. Tindal and their ward, ending with a notice that, believing Mr. Tindal a cruelly injured man, as free of the crime imputed to him as either of themselves, he had not hesitated to sanction it. His letter reached Mr. Wynyard by the same post, as a second from Mr. Hargrove on the same topic; and the next day arrived two more—

one from Mr. Tindal, and the other from Pennie herself.

The poor expatriated gentleman was bothered exceedingly by this awkward love-story of his ward's. He would have liked to write back, "Give her her head; let her marry the first man that asks her, only I am quit of her, and of Hargrove's perpetual suggestions to bolster up my own miserable fortunes by helping myself to hers!" To his agent he did write almost as bluntly as this; but when he had taken thought during an hour or two's sultry mooning country-wards from Dieppe, he penned a considerate letter to Pennie, recommending patience, and a glimpse of the world beyond Eskdale before she set a seal to her life that must stamp it to the close; a manly letter to Mr. Tindal, declining to recognize any bond that he might have made with his ward until she had had time and opportunity given her to understand her own and his position better than she could possibly do now; and a short letter to Dr. Grey, conveying in rather more decorous phrase Mr. Hargrove's opinion, that "he was a pretty trustee for an heiress."

"So I am," confessed the doctor, with shame and confusion of face; "but it is never too late to mend."

He went over to the lawyer's office one unoccupied morning, when Buckhurst had taken his country round, intent on acquiring some information respecting Pennie's monetary business. Hargrove received him with a cynical laugh. "You have some lee-way to make up, Grey, I can tell you," said he, glancing at one of a row of japanned boxes shelved in his private room, on which the words "Croft-Ward" were painted in white letters.

Dr. Grey was not a rich man, nor a knowing man. He had never been in the way of handling much money, and he was almost ignorant of the details of business; but his newspaper had made him acquainted with the pet rogueries of trustees, agents, bankers, and so forth, and he asked to see for himself that the securities for Pennie's property were all safe. He did not care a chip for affronting Mr. Hargrove; he was indeed rather glad than otherwise to show that he did suspect his honesty, and that he had an inkling of what knavish lawyers might do with their clients' papers if they pleased.

Mr. Hargrove, with the liveliest good-humour, reached down the box, unlocked it, and tumbled out a mass of parchments, of every shade of antiquity; some single, some tied in thick bundles, and other documents besides.

"What will you start with?" asked he, airily. "Do you propose to read 'm all through? These are the deeds relating to Haggerston Mills; and these again belong to the little farm at Appley. That's the last mortgage raised on Methley Towers —and that's another. These are railway debentures and preference shares; and these bits of spotty paper represent a large sum in the 'sweet simplicity,' as somebody calls it, of the three per cents."

"I tell you what, Hargrove, I don't understand you just at present—you have a game, but I don't quite see it," interposed the doctor. "Perhaps the things are all there."

"Confound you and your fancies, Grey; perhaps you have not got a bee in your bonnet this morning!" roared the lawyer all of a sudden, bursting out in his big bullying tone. The clerk opened the door of the outer room, peeped in, and shut it again.

Dr. Grey's nerves were too tough to be shaken by a voice ever so loud. "Come, come, Hargrove, bullying won't do with me," he said, with contemptuous coolness. "As long as Mr. Wynyard was on the spot he was check enough. I had no fear but that all would go right, but now that he has gone out of the way under such awkward circumstances, I am not so sure. I'll trouble you to send me a detailed list of all these things—I should like to be on the safe side when Miss Croft calls on us to render an account of our trusteeship. You understand, Hargrove?"

"I understand. You shall have the list written out plain, as if it was for a lady; and you can have the box down once a week, and compare it with the contents, if you like." The doctor pocketed the sneer, and went out. The suggestion was not bad—once a week would be too much of a good thing, but once a year would be practical and sensible, and no great trouble either; and he made a resolution that he would not neglect it.

Pennie met a hearty welcome from her mother

on her arrival at Mayfield, and found her parlour fragrant with fresh-cut roses. A pile of new entertaining books was on the table.

"Them's from the Abbey, Pennie, love," said Mrs. Croft, as her daughter noticed them. "When I heard you were to be here as to-day, I walked up to see Mr. Tindal, and get an understanding of things, which it is no more than proper I should. And this morning he sent the books with a note. Here it is."

Pennie opened the note and read,—"My dear child, your mother has told me that you are coming to Mayfield for a week's hay-making. I have her permission to send you some books, and to see you, my pet; but *not* every day." Pennie turned suddenly about, and rewarded her mother with another kiss, and another to that.

"When gels falls in love they is *so* affectionate," said the widow, and refrained herself for the present from anything more.

There was a good deal in the note, besides what has been quoted above, but as it was meant only for Pennie's private delectation, and was not all sense, it

need not be given in full. The pith was in the first lines, and the rest was a variation on the eternal sweet rondo of lovers, pitched in a plaintive minor key.

As early on the morrow as a lady might be presumed to be at liberty to receive a visitor, Mr. Tindal presented himself at Mayfield, and Pennie and he had a long, open-hearted talk over their common interests. It is not often that so dark a wrong side to their loves falls to the lot of mortals. Pennie was much, much happier than he, because she was ignorant, and had a more hopeful temperament.

"Think of Millicent and Michael Forester," said she; and harped on that string of good augury until she had almost persuaded Mr. Tindal into her own frame of mind. But the good effect was transient. Her love was a rest and stay to him, but he was past exhilarating for longer than an hour. After thirty, the world claims its share in a man's interests, and love is no more the be-all and end-all of existence, as at twenty it appears. On the whole, he was sad that day.

On the next he was more melancholy still. He

had received a letter from Normandy, and must needs go to Mayfield early to communicate it. He found Pennie pondering over hers. Her mother had warned her last night that if she married Mr. Tindal, she would be only marrying herself to misery, and she was intent on feeling and proving that she had no manner of dread of being anything but blessed in her choice. She exchanged her letter with Mr. Tindal's to read. Both were filled with very sound, vexatious common-sense.

Mr. Tindal smiled sarcastic over the document offered for his perusal, and when he had finished it, said, "Why are you that important thing, a great heiress, Pennie? If you could divest yourself of your money, I might take you now, when I have sore need of you—as it is, I must wait until you have seen the world, or have it all crying out on me, not only as an assassin, but as a robber of the bank. Mr. Wynyard thinks it is not an honourable course I have taken—perhaps I ought to leave you free?" —this interrogatively.

"What if I like my bondage better? They think I shall change, but they don't know me!"

Pennie was always more attractive for a touch of enthusiasm, that kindled her eyes, and made her breathe short.

"I cannot let you go of myself, child. While you stick to me, I will try to rest, and be thankful. I dare not tempt you to break with others for the sake of me; but let us pray, both of us, for a short day of probation. I have a positive terror of setting forth again on my solitary travels. I hate to be alone. I dread my own vacancy more than ever. And yet, can I stay at Rood with you away?"

Pennie endeavoured her utmost to cheer him; and she did succeed a little, though he heard and felt in every word and tone and look that she knew no more of the horror of great darkness that had compassed his solitude about, during the last few weeks, than a baby knows of the cares that may be crooning in its mother's heart while it is babbling and laughing in her face. Pennie imagined that her sympathy fathomed the depths of his sufferings; but indeed it fell short by many and many a line. It is not conceivable, in fact, that a girl should understand the recurrent pangs of such a life as lay behind

him, or such a dreary waste as he saw stretching out long before. Nevertheless, her present love was an interlude of sheenland, the remembrance of which might go with him into the wilderness. Other men had broken down, and had fled from the glare of society into the very shadow of death, to escape from much lighter calamities than had been laid on him; but he had walked long under his load erect, and if he began now to faint and weary, was it a marvel, when, after seeing it for a moment unloosed, it had been bound on his aching shoulders faster than ever?

"When the days come to an end, and I lie down at night, I feel that I should just like to stretch myself out and die," he said to Pennie; and Pennie, with shining eyes, answered that he must not give way to thinking so. If he had given way to thinking so, perhaps the dying might have been accomplished ere now.

The next day was Sunday. Both morning and afternoon the Tindal pew at church was empty. Pennie felt sorry; and not being apt at hiding her

sorrow, she let Mrs. Featherston see that she thought the vicar had done unwisely and unkindly in allowing it to be known that he had taken the vulgar side against his patron.

"*But, my dear!*" remonstrated the clergyman's wife, who, though much given to mending the erroneous ways of others, was quite unused to being taken to task herself.

Pennie did not weaken the impression she had made by mere words. Mrs. Featherston parted from her with inward disturbance, and a doubt of her own perfection, such as had not often troubled her before. Perhaps she and the vicar had been hasty. It *was* easy to follow a multitude to do evil, as Pennie said. Perhaps they *ought* to have made a firmer stand; to have been more cautious how they dealt with an unhappy man, whose fate would have urged some to despair. They *had* acted the part of the priest and Levite of old, and *had* passed by on the other side, leaving him to bleed to death of his wounds, unless some chance Samaritan should come that way. What a caustic tongue that little, sad-faced girl possessed! She made no scruple of applying Holy

Writ to common life: the vicar's wife had not thought it of her.

The only visitors to Mayfield that afternoon were Mr. Lister and Dick. The latter had quite dropped his cousinly freedoms, and treated Pennie with a frank and friendly respect. She liked the change, and was easy and cordial with him. Her uncle shook hands more warmly than was his wont; and immediately said, without any affectation of delicacy.

"Well, niece, I, for one, am not going to blame you. There's a deal to be said about what's lately turned up that hasn't been said yet—not in t' papers anyhow. If I'd ever had an opinion one way or t' other, which I can't rightlings say as I ever had, I should be for clearing Mr. Tindal, when I see a young lass, that's no fool, willing to take him for better, for worse."

Mrs. Croft groaned, shook her head doubtingly, and said, "Ah! but he should hear Hargrove talk."

"Hargrove's a rare deep file—clever family the Hargroves, all of 'em. Was it our man or his

brother, the editor, wrote them stunning pieces in *Norminster Gazette*, I should like to know. Lawyer's a goodish penman."

Pennie started when she heard this significant fact, and laid it to heart. She could have no more doubt now whence issued the inspiration of that last cruel article which had closed the account of the Rood tragedy in the favourite Eskdale news. She was confirmed in a suspicion that, for some motive unknown, Mr. Hargrove sought to keep her apart from Mr. Tindal, and that the way he took to his object was by insisting on Mr. Tindal's guilt. This suspicion Doctor Grey shared with his ward; but he explained the agent's behaviour into an anxiety to retain the management of Pennie's affairs, and the profits therefrom arising, of which her marriage, whether with Mr. Tindal or anybody else, would possibly deprive him. He was not thoroughly at ease in his mind whether there might not also be something nefarious to hide, which must come to light when she changed her estate. Mr. Hargrove's violence had given him this impression, but he did not know where to turn for its proof. The lawyer

had a very general reputation for integrity—at least, no public slur had yet been cast upon it.

It was not a joyous haymaking to Pennie that summer. She outstayed her week at Mayfield, as she always did outstay her leave at home; but the simple, old-fashioned ways of it, which needed a peaceful soul to enjoy them, had lost their savour. Several more letters passed between Mr. Wynyard and Mr. Tindal, and Mr. Wynyard and his ward, ending in an accepted fiat that, until Pennie was of age, the lovers must submit to a total separation. Neither would consent to this except under pressure; and when Pennie showed signs of rebellion, that pressure was applied without sparing. Doctor Grey, much against his will, was deputed by her co-trustee to intimate to her seriously that if she did not pay due and lawful obedience to her guardians and her mother in this most important matter, she would be handed to the Lord Chancellor as an intractable heiress, over whom her natural friends were unable to keep ward. The indefiniteness of this menace subdued Pennie. Doctor Grey declined to counte-

nance her in any immediate revolt against the judgment of Mr. Wynyard and her mother, and Mr. Tindal, seeing no help for it, reluctantly acquiesced in the decree. Their engagement, however, both were determined to hold sacred.

Mrs. Croft's heart ached often to give Pennie her way when she saw her little distressed air, but a stern sense of duty prevailed over her capricious affectionateness, and she ended by persuading herself that she was certainly acting for the best.

"You may well afford to wait, you are not nineteen, Pennie, love," argued she soothingly. "It is not many gels that marry before they're nineteen. I shouldn't wonder yet if you got off before your cousins."

"I am not thinking of it in that way," said Pennie, plaintively. "But *he* is so lonely and forsaken. If we might only write to each other—it is very hard to forbid me that."

"I could not give you leave, even if I thought it wise, which I don't, Pennie," replied her mother, retreating into austerity. "I've been too easy in letting him come here as it is. You may see him

just once more to bid good-by, and I won't listen to a word beyond that. If your love is worth ought, it will keep till you're your own mistress; and if it won't keep till then, the sooner you forget it the better."

Pennie wept herself to sleep that night, and the next evening—the evening before she was to return to Eastwold, Mr. Tindal came to Mayfield to take his farewell of her. They said their disconsolate good-byes in the garden amongst the yew-trees.

"It is very cruel," murmured Pennie, tears in her eyes and in her voice, "very cruel and unkind. They might have allowed us to correspond. How shall I know where you are? How will you know where I am? Two years and a half must pass before I may see you or hear of you again."

"It will not seem so long to you, darling, as it will to me," was the most comforting thing he could find to say. He knew very well that the design of this long and severe probation was that she should see something of the world, and perhaps *somebody* who would teach her to forget him, But he had faith in her constancy, and after a pause, he added:

"Don't give way to fretting, Pennie; we are sure to meet now and then by chance, or to have news of each other. Be as gay and happy as you can meanwhile. I cannot promise you that I will be gay, but I will try to make myself busy."

Pennie sighed. Two years and a half looked like a lifetime to her.

"We may meet and hear, but *when?* but *how?*" said she.

Mr. Tindal's experience had not been such as makes a man hopefully prophetic. "God knows!" responded he.

The twilight and the dew were now falling. Twice Mrs. Croft had shown herself in the porch, impatient for her daughter's going in. The second time the lovers saw her, they were warned that it was time to part. Pennie's tears were overflowing now, instead of giving comfort, she wanted it herself.

Mr. Tindal drew her to him, and kissed her tenderly. "My dear child, my darling little Pennie, if God will only spare me, I will pay you for this sorrow some day!"

She laid her head against his breast, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Mrs. Croft came into the porch again,—came down the garden walk. When she saw the state of affairs she was touched, but she said crossly, "you had better go your way now, Mr. Tindal, and leave her to me." And after a few more expressive farewells at the garden-door, he gave Pennie up to her mother, and went. His own grief was the less, because hers was so great, and promised permanence of love. Nevertheless he wished ardently that it was the end, and not the beginning of their ordeal.

END OF PART I.

MR. WYNYARD'S WARD.

PART II.

I.

PENNIE HAS A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD.

A NEW era opened in the life of Mr. Wynyard's ward when she parted with Mr. Tindal at Mayfield garden-door. There was a long probation before her, which found her a girl, and made her a woman. She moped at first, and her friends were universally of opinion that the time was come to give her a glimpse of the world.

"Get her away from Eastwold, and let her have a bit of touring and pleasuring," said her mother. "La! bless you, shut a lass up, and she'll eat her heart out, but she'll fall in love with somebody."

In finer phrase Mrs. Wynyard expressed the same sentiment. So also did the dame at Brackenfield, and the dame's married daughters. Even Millicent Forester, who knew Pennie best, was in-

clined to think Pen might forget her girlish idyll, when she was a year or two wiser in the world's wisdom. At all events, let her have leisure for second thoughts, the opportunity of wider choice; no fear that with her fortune, notwithstanding her plain face, but she would have suitors enough.

But who was to take charge of her? Who was to give her her glimpse of the world. Mrs. Wynyard had too many ties at home. Mrs. Croft had no *entrée* in polite society. Pennie got dreadfully impatient when she heard herself and her prospects, day after day, under discussion. For a full fortnight she was bent on leading a nun's life, until she and her lover could be happily re-united, beyond the power of stony-hearted guardians to separate them any more: for a whole fortnight, the longest in her life, during which no whisper of Mr. Tindal reached her. At the end of those fourteen weary days came two letters: her mother's periodical gossip, in which the Abbey was casually mentioned as being *left to itself;* and a kind epistle from Lady Goodwin, who wrote to say that she and Sir Andrew were going abroad in September for Sir Andrew's health, and that if

Pennie were pleased to travel in their company, they should be happy to afford her their escort.

Pennie could not have believed there was spring enough left in her heavy heart to make such a bound as it made at this reading. She coloured unconsciously, and Mrs. Wynyard, under whose consideration the proposal had been brought, in a long previous correspondence with her sister, was at no loss to interpret these signs of emotion. Pennie handed her the letter. She perused it, and then said,—"Well, Pennie, what do you think of it? I think you cannot do better than accept Lady Goodwin's offer."

Pennie was clearly of the same opinion, but she had a little struggle with her inclination. Was it faithful to give up being miserable? Whether it was faithful or not, something within her protested that it would soon be a physical impossibility to remain so. She ate well, she slept well, she had her health in perfection—prosaic facts to record of a young woman in her bereaved condition, but youth be her excuse, and youthful confidence in her life all coming right by-and-by.

It was settled, of course, that Pennie should go

abroad. Sir Andrew Goodwin, worthy man, grumbled a little. He didn't see why they should encumber themselves with the responsibility of an heiress. "We shall have a pack of foreign fortune-hunters after her—that is where it will be," he told his wife.

"Who need know that she has a fortune?" replied she, and pacified his fears.

There were yet some weeks to elapse before Pennie set forth to see the world. She contrived to pass them not unhappily. She had quite made up her mind. "If we both live, as soon as I am free, I know what I shall do;" and once thus resolved, present times and things came easier to her. Or, if sorrowful reminiscence and anticipation got now and then the better of her philosophy, she ordered out her pony, enjoyed a canter over the airy, blossomy moor, and came back refreshed in heart and hope. Pennie was, in fact, herself again.

There were rumours of war in the world at this time; Russians and Turks fighting on the Danube—battle of Oltenitza, massacre of Sinope on the old, im-

memorial pattern of war: English and French fleets sailing round to Sebastopol, and blockading Russia in her Black Sea fortress, to know the reason why.

It was a lovely September afternoon when the Goodwins and Pennie crossed from Folkestone to Boulogne—a mere pleasure trip. Sir Andrew had his *Times*, over which he fell into conversation with a tall, ancient personage, white-bearded and soldierly. The probability of England entering into the quarrel was their topic. Pennie heard their talk without much heeding it. Peace and war—they were only sounds to her, echoes of pages in school-books, unreal, unrealized. She had not yet committed herself to a daily perusal of newspapers. She knew nothing of the evils and sins, and miseries and tragedies, that are in the world, except by deduction from the one tragedy that influenced her own life. Therefore when the white-bearded gentleman said to Sir Andrew authoritatively,—"We shall certainly have war; we *must* have war; and not a little war either," the words drifted by her ears with the very slightest significance.

A sentence in the next letter she received from

her mother put meaning into them. Mrs. Croft wrote,—"The Abbey is likely to be left to itself a long while. The master is gone to the East. They say here that he has volunteered to help the Turks, who have been getting up a quarrel with the Christians. But surely he could never be such a heathen as that. A Turk is a Turk, and knows no better, poor creature, but Mr. Tindal was taught at school and church, and his mother was a pious woman as ever stepped. If what I hear is true, I shall begin to think worse of him than ever I thought yet. And I hope you are getting him out of your head."

Pennie was doing anything but getting him out of her head. When they reached Paris, her first expedition was to Hachette's, to buy all the books, pamphlets and papers that would explain to her the rise and progress of the war-cloud in the East. Mr. Tindal was there; she had not a doubt of it. And if he was there, it was for some noble purpose, she felt sure. Perhaps he was gone to seek the opportunity of honourable fame: to redeem his wasted life by some grand act which would compel all true men to accord him their trust again. In Pennie's imagina-

tion he was already exalted into a warrior and a hero. She had no heart-aching fears for his safety. Indeed, to herself she avowed it, she would have had a proud consolation in his making a glorious end, if he left a glorious name, in the light of which the black calumny that eclipsed it now, might be overpowered and done away. Her sentiment was a new reading of the old lyric: she could not have loved her lover so much, had she not loved his honour more than himself. If Providence had made her the opportunity, she would have told him so.

To come down from aspirations to realities. Lady Goodwin was pleased with Pennie. She discerned large capabilities of improvement in her. "You call her ugly—in my opinion her face is twenty times more striking and attractive than half the pretty insipidities one sees," was her dictum delivered to a fashionable matron of her acquaintance—no other, indeed, than Lady Brooke, who was also in Paris with her husband.

"Yes, I call her hopelessly ugly—impracticably ugly," replied the fat, fair dame.

"With her nice eyes, clean-cut mouth and chin, and soft, spotless complexion?"

"Complexion — she has no complexion. Her skin is smooth enough, but it is only one tint lighter than a gipsy."

"In two or three years, when she is a woman and not a girl, I do not hesitate to predict that she will be very much admired. She has not done growing yet. I shall put her into the hands of a good dressmaker and a good milliner, and they will do her justice."

Lady Goodwin developed excellent qualities as a *chaperone*. She had not been very enthusiastic about Pennie to begin with; but a few weeks' intimate acquaintance brought her to a thorough enjoyment of her office. Mr. Wynyard's ward began now to be made the most of. A splendid madame, from the *Rue de la Paix*, instructed her in the artistic powers of dress, and, as Pennie was gifted with a fine sense of the fitness of things, she learnt aptly and appreciated the lesson. About shapes and fashions, said the Frenchwoman, she had no ground for anxiety; a sack would not disguise the *svelte*

elegance of her figure; *colour* would be her Scylla, *ornament* her Charybdis. Let her therefore study colour and ornament. Pennie, though willing to be well-dressed, laughed and moralized over the serious business made of it. But the Frenchwoman was far too conscientious, far too deeply impressed with the dignities and responsibilities of her profession to laugh — she moralized, in fact, more soundly than Pennie.

"Who affects to despise clothing is foolish," said she. "Clothing, it is the outward expression of the inward sentiment. A woman ill-dressed is a mind ill-cultivated, is a soul dead of feeling. The perfect dress is suitable, is neat, is of consequence charming. It is impossible to love the woman who goes all *so*," a gesture of the hands expressive of tawdry slip-sloppiness completed madame's little oration.

"A ball at the British Embassy was to be the scene of Pennie's *début* in Paris—her first glimpse of the great world. Lady Goodwin assured her before they set out that she could not possibly look nicer. Her own glass had told her the same. She

did not like yellow in the abstract, but she could not deny that the yellow silk, white tulle, and golden wheat-ears that composed and embellished her attire, added a quite novel lustre to her polished neck, her arms, her dusky visage ; that, though as far as ever from being pretty, madame's genius had brought out all her latent powers of being picturesque. The fame of her great fortune had gone before her, and was generally known in the English society of Paris. Lady Brooke had proclaimed her ugliness as a heavy drawback on her more solid attractions, but Pennie did not strike strangers as being at all unreasonably ugly. Several persons of taste and distinction requested an introduction to her—for dancing purposes, of course. And then it came out that Pennie would not dance—*could* not dance, as ladies dance in Paris. Lady Goodwin was positively distressed.

"You ought to have begun to take lessons the day we arrived," whispered she. "I take blame to myself for my forgetfulness. Yes—I quite recollect your little style at Brackenfield and Norminster Ball, your little capers and twirls that made Uncle Christopher laugh. That was the fashion fifty

years ago—I am quite grieved: but we will not have you make an exhibition of yourself. Better sit still than do that."

So Pennie sat still, not at all disconsolately. Her only dancing-master had been a wizened, very old Swiss, originally a valet, married to an English cook, who lived at Allan Bridge, and combined instruction in fencing, in dancing, and in the French language, with the trade of hairdresser, barber, and perfumer. Eskdale availed itself of his services in every capacity, and was perfectly satisfied with the result so long as it stayed at home. Pennie looked so new, primitive, and pleased with all she saw, that when she offered this rustic fact to Mr. Clifford, a very serene Englishman, in explanation of her second refusal to *valse* with him, he pronounced her simplicity *delicious*. He would not have appreciated it so highly, if he had not been assured that she was worth more than her weight in gold—literally speaking, worth more than her weight in gold. Pennie had been so described, and the description clung to her.

"Vitz is de littel Englis gel dat is worse more

zan her weight in gold?" was asked in a shrill whisper behind her, while the serene Englishman in front was holding her in light ball-room conversation. Pennié laughed silently, thoroughly appreciating the fun of the inquiry. Another voice—the unmistakable growl of a Briton—made answer that all little English girls were worth more than their weight in gold, and Pennie's acquaintance, glancing quickly round, said, "What, Bangham, are you here?"

"I wish I was anywhere else. Paris is confoundedly like an oven, and this is the hottest corner of it. How d'ye do?" Captain Bangham held out his hand, and the countrymen exchanged the national greeting.

"Well, d'ye think we shall go to war?" was the next question.

"Not a doubt of it. Can't understand what the Government means, shilly-shallying like this. Much better show 'em we mean it, and give 'em it hot and strong at once. That is what I say."

"That is what everybody says, both here and in London. There are not two opinions about it." The

friends moved off, and Lady Brooke sailed, a great white luminous cloud, into the space Mr. Clifford had vacated. She loomed largely benignant over Pennie, hoped she was enjoying her first Paris ball, and regretted not to see her better engaged than sitting still. She offered to try to find her a partner—she had no doubt she could.

"Thank you," said Pennie; "but it would be of no use, for I cannot dance." Then she had to explain. Lady Brooke was amazed; urged her to try—anything passed for dancing now-a-days; her friends would make allowance.

"I am very well entertained. The music is lovely. I do not at all care for sitting still," replied Pennie, confused by the tone of compassionate patronage with which it was Lady Brooke's whim to address her.

"What an odd little creature you are! I suppose it would be impossible to make you look or think like other people. I should *so* much like to ask you a question. I can see through your glove that you still wear the bride-ring of Rood." Pennie coloured slightly, and her air betrayed that she did not like

the turn of the conversation. Lady Brooke became only the more inquisitive. "Tell me," whispered she, "do you hold to your pledge? I know your guardians have refused to recognize any sort of engagement between you and Mr. Tindal; but do you adhere to it yourselves?"

"I shall not deny it; but I do not acknowledge your right to catechize me," said Pennie, flushing deeper and deeper.

Lady Brooke only smiled superior at the little country girl's rebuff. She had learned all she wished to know, and within five minutes she had apprised a dear, deeply-indebted friend, on the look-out for a good match to retrieve his fortunes, that in her judgment it would be only love's labour lost to pay court to Penelope Croft.

Lady Goodwin had a *chaperone's* eye on her charge the whole night; but she had too many friends and acquaintances to greet and chat with for more than this. It was certainly tiresome to bring a girl to a ball who could not dance, especially a girl whom twenty people wanted to dance with.

"If you could have danced, Pennie, your *début*

might have been quite a success," she said to her just before supper. "Instead of that, it is almost a failure, and Lady Brooke is going about pitying you."

"I don't care," said Pennie. "There is nobody here I should like to dance with—nobody I mind ever meeting again."

She was not sorry, however, when Mr. Clifford re-appeared, and after a word or two with Lady Goodwin, proposed to conduct her charge to the supper-room. He had a very agreeable manner—quiet, easy, kind. She was not afraid of him. He was not young, and he looked rather fatigued and tired of everything but the little pleasure he took in her freshness. This was obvious. It set Pennie free to enjoy in her own fashion. He led her to supper, fed her with dainties such as girls love, then escorted her through the long suite of rooms, the conservatories, the lamp-lit gardens, and back again to Lady Goodwin's sheltering wing. As Pennie resumed her seat, Mr. Clifford whispered an aside to her *chaperone:* "Lady Goodwin, she is *charming.*" Pennie's first sip of flattery—she found it

sweet. When Mr. Clifford assisted her presently to the carriage, the conscious intoxication of it was in her eyes and in her voice. She responded to his calm "Good-night" with a gentle flutter of the nerves. Come to herself again, she thought what a little, silly fool she was: the fact being that she knew nothing yet of the world, and very little of herself.

The next day Mr. Clifford called upon Sir Andrew and Lady Goodwin at their hotel. The carriage had just been brought round to take them for a drive with Pennie to St. Cloud. They proposed that he should fill the vacant seat, and come with them. He consented—he had no engagement that he could remember. All very listlessly, he said it. Pennie felt what an interesting person he was: he must have a history with that manner certainly. Sir Andrew Goodwin was sometimes rather sarcastic in his sententious speeches, and as the conversation engaged and grew animated between Mr. Clifford and his wife, Pennie divined that the Yorkshire squire did not admire—did not quite believe in the *blasé* citizen of the world; that if good manners had not

forbidden, he would more than once have cried "*Fudge!*" to his sentiments. They were old acquaintances: the men had indeed been boys together at Eton, and had a score of reminiscences in common to recal, in many of which Lady Goodwin held her place. Mr. Clifford had visited at Brackenfield some years before. He had also been in Eskdale—at Rood Abbey, as it presently revealed itself to Pennie. He spoke of himself, in fact, as Hugh Tindal's friend. For obvious reasons, Sir Andrew tried to turn the conversation; Mr. Clifford, unaware of them, persevered.

"Dreadful fate to be cut off in that sudden way. It has never been cleared up yet, has it?" He was told it had not. "I see a woman's hand in it—always did. Scandalous thing to lay it to his brother." Pennie experienced a fresh movement of sympathy towards Mr. Clifford. Lady Goodwin interposed with some inquiry about the lady whom the Emperor had just exalted from a private station to share his throne. There was ten minutes good talk on that topic, and then the carriage was at the park-gate of St. Cloud.

They did not go over the palace, but they walked for an hour in the park and in the formal gardens, and then drove back to Paris as they had come. There was no second allusion to the Rood Abbey tragedy; and when they arrived in the courtyard of the hotel, Mr. Clifford took his leave, and went his way.

He went his way then, but he came back several times again. Sir Andrew asked his wife what he meant by it, the inveterate dangler. "I'm sure," said the Squire, "it is not for love of my company, and I do not think it is for love of yours." Lady Goodwin suggested that it might be for love of Pennie's.

"Don't encourage that—he'll never marry her. There is not a prouder man on the face of the earth. A word of her kith and kin would rout all your schemes. And for the fellow himself, he is so consequential, though he is nothing and has nothing, that a woman of at all inferior rank would be cursed with such a companion. Let us have no match-making, my dear, whatever we have. I shall tell him hers is a railway-mania fortune."

Lady Goodwin felt slightly disappointed. She fancied her prosperous mate was rather hard on Mr. Clifford, who began life with his way to make, and thus far had made it by no means effectually. He was a lover of pleasure, a lover of ease; his fine person was a little decaying, his moderate fortune was long since mortgaged. Even to men of the world the most knowing, it was a mystery how he kept up the game—dined well, lodged well, dressed well; had admission to desirable houses, and napoleons always in his pocket. It must be play—he must know a trick or two on the cards, was the common explanation. Perhaps he did. But he staved off the desperate air of those who have only luck to depend on. He might more than once have established himself by a moneyed match, but he formed a mistaken estimate of his deserts. He wanted nothing less than all—birth, youth, breeding, beauty, and fortune. He was not even yet—after several failures—disabused of the expectation that he should get them. Pennie possessed three of his essentials—youth, breeding, and fortune, and enough of attraction to stand in the

place of beauty, but he knew nothing of her origin. For that, however, he thought her association with the respectable Goodwins voucher sufficient; and he had it seriously in contemplation, after he had been twice or thrice in her company, to pay her a little court, with such ultimate views as circumstances might decide on. This business, very cautiously conducted, brought him often to the *hôtel* at an hour when the ladies were in; took him of an evening to their resorts, to theatre and opera; and caused him to make his diurnal ride in the same direction as they made their drive. Pennie was always pleasant, always gratified when he appeared.

"The little jade," said Sir Andrew; "I do believe she is encouraging him!" For though the object of showing her the world was to detach her mind from Mr. Tindal, men approve a constant woman. And Pennie was faithful at heart;—but there is an influence in agreeable, delicately flattering assiduity. Mr. Clifford made Paris a much more charming abode to her than it would have been in his absence.

There was no sort of explanation, nor was there any abrupt break in their intimacy. Sir Andrew mentioned one day, incidentally, how and when Pennie's money-bags were filled; and Mr. Clifford, without surprise or emotion, detailed an unhappy venture of his own at that epoch. There was an end of all serious speculation on the heiress's future, but he continued to be kind and cordial; for he thought her a nice little girl—a nice little girl, moreover, with a very promising leaning towards admiration of himself. Pennie never guessed what her yeoman-blood had caused her to miss. She knew what it was to love and be loved. She thought Mr. Clifford had helped to make Paris pleasant; but she was quite ready to have Florence and Rome made pleasant in the same way by somebody else. Sir Andrew, when he found this out, declared to his wife that Pennie was a flirt. Lady Goodwin knew better. Society exhilarated the country-bred girl; she liked it, though she was a little off her balance in it. But she looked the best and the happiest in those quiet hours of scenery-mooning, when she could escape every-day talk, and let her

roving imagination loose after Mr. Tindal. She did a great deal of day-dreaming in this fashion; but she always returned from her flights at call, and entered into every traveller's scheme with girlish satisfaction and energy. Just before they left Paris for Italy, in October, Lady Goodwin wrote to Mrs. Wynyard: "Pennie does not worry us by parading any widow's airs; but I do not think she has swerved a straw's breadth from her resolve to be Mr. Tindal's wife."

This communication came circuitously about to Mr. Hargrove's ears. He received it with much complacency. "We must give her time. Two years more will try her," said he to Mrs. Croft. "There is no haste for her to marry at all yet—she is only a child." The widow, in a sense agreed with him,—but she did hope Pennie would marry—and young.

"Of course she will—why should she not?" said the lawyer, encouragingly. But at the same time he entertained a lively hope that Mr. Wynyard's ward would prove long and obstinately rebellious. He had not quite liked the going abroad scheme;

he professed to think such a rich heiress would run a thousand dangers from the pursuit of English ne'er-do-weels and foreign sharpers. Lady Goodwin's information was of a kind to relieve his fears, and they were relieved accordingly. Dr. Grey also was pleased by it, but for other reasons. He was glad Pennie was staunch to his unfortunate friend. "And she will be if she is worth a chip," was his bold reply to Mrs. Wynyard when she apprised him of the fact.

The Goodwins' next move was to Nice. Here Sir Andrew felt or fancied himself not so well as he ought to be, and after three days' rest he took passage for his party from Marseilles to Leghorn, for Florence. In the beautiful Tuscan city he was better, and better amused. He found there some English acquaintance of his own kind —hard-worked, prosy people, travelling for health of brain and body like himself. Pennie was also well contented. It had been the desire of her heart to see Italy—but then she desired to see it in certain company. She, however, consoled herself with the hope that she might some day revisit it—and meantime she took her pleasure as it came.

Lady Goodwin had been twice before on this well-gleaned track of tourists, and so it came to pass that Pennie wandered often with no other companion than her maid through the dim splendour of the churches, and amongst the priceless gems of art in the palaces and galleries. Returning from one of these solitary expeditions towards dusk, about a week after their arrival in Florence, she found the entrance of the *hôtel* in some disturbance. Two strangers had just dismounted in the courtyard, and wanted rooms. The host declared that his inn was full. To this the stouter of the new-comers replied, shortly: "Bosh!" and Pennie recognized Captain Bangham—the propounder, to the inquiring Frenchman at the Embassy ball, of the very loyal opinion that all little English girls were worth more than their weight in gold. His companion was younger, very ruddy of hair and complexion, of giraffe-like tallness, and of military air and gait. Pennie made her way upstairs, and lost sight and hearing of the wrangle.

The little party was sitting at dinner in quiet state about two hours later, when the door opened,

and in marched the slim, florid stranger. "You here, George!" cried Lady Goodwin, who faced the entrance.

"Just come. Two months' leave. Andrew, old fellow, how d'ye do? This is better luck than I expected."

Sir Andrew gave his young brother a cordial shake of the hand, commanded back the soup, and made him sit down. "Better luck than I expected either, George," said he. There was a rapid passage of question and answer for a few minutes, and then Lady Goodwin asked her brother-in-law if he remembered Penelope Croft, adding that she thought they must have met at Brackenfield.

"If I remember her! she gave me good cause. Happy to see you again, Miss Pennie; that is, if you have given up pulling hair," was his amazing reply. Pennie, who had recognized him the moment he entered the room without his hat, replied demurely that she had—except under the same circumstances of provocation.

"Did she ever pull yours, George? I hope you punished her," said Sir Andrew, enjoying the joke.

"Didn't I? Ask her? under the mistletoe. Do they have mistletoe at Brackenfield still?"

"At Christmas; oh, yes! That old custom will see this generation out, and many another."

"I should like to go there again. Andrew, we are safe to have war in the spring; there is nothing else talked of in London. *We* shall go out, of course. What maundering old fogies the Government are, to let the Czar get so much start of us. That fleet at Sebastopol means more mischief—and the men he is sending south!"

"You Guards and Grenadiers will be enough for them," replied Sir Andrew, soberly.

"Queer start of the Quakers, wasn't it? travelling off to Petersburg to preach peace to old Nick."

"I am sure I wish they had succeeded," said Lady Goodwin with a sigh. "War is a dreadful thing." She remembered her younger brother, dead in India, and all the horrors of that desperate retreat from Cabool, in which he perished, with thousands of men besides, as brave and as good as he. Perished in a lost expedition—not even with the halo

of glory. Sir Andrew knew whither his wife's thoughts had flown, and changed the conversation. Who was in Florence, whence they came, how long they were going to stay, and so forth.

George Goodwin talked fast and fluently, with now and then a sort of half-shy curb upon him. A most impressionable young man he was—very young, good-natured, honourable, and brave. The chapter of his love-fancies was long and varied, and before the evening was spent, by the natural laws of human attraction, the lean, red-headed grenadier had fallen into captivity to little nut-brown Pennie, whose dark head reached up scarcely to his elbow. The first result was shame that he had reverted to his disasters of former years, and dread lest he might have frightened or affronted her by recalling her vixenish exploit.

"She is very clever, isn't she?" he asked his sister-in-law confidentially when Pennie had retired. "She looks as wise as"—he was going to say *as an owl*, but he recollected in time that the bird was not complimentary, viewed in the light of a comparison.

Lady Goodwin gave her charge a good character

for sense, discretion, amiability, and companionableness; and while dilating on her merits, there suddenly flashed into her own mind a thought of what a nice thing it would be if George, who was really a good, kind, upright fellow—in fact, she fell into a speculation on the propriety and possibility of engaging those two young people in the holy bonds of matrimony. She would not have fulfilled her mission in giving Pennie a glimpse of the world, if she did not succeed in detaching her affections from Mr. Tindal; and what means more likely to be effective than bringing her within range of a counter-attraction? It would not only be a justifiable, but a positively laudable act. Lady Goodwin went to her pillow with a new interest in life. The seriousness of it did not prevent her laughing inwardly at the queer contrast the pair she sought to couple would present.

George Goodwin proved himself a very tractable, teachable swain. Pennie had been longing for some rides through the autumnal beauties of the wooded hills and country places about Florence; but for lack of an enterprising escort, she had been restricted to

an occasional amble with Sir Andrew in the fashionable promenade. Who now, therefore, so useful and agreeable as George? The very morning after his arrival, Lady Goodwin had the satisfaction of seeing them ride out in company, and the still higher satisfaction of seeing them return in excellent humour with their excursion and each other. Till then she had kept her scheme locked in the secret of her own bosom, but she now resolved that she ought to confide it to Sir Andrew.

At the first blush of his wife's proposal, Sir Andrew was strongly inclined to confound the meddlesomeness of women, but his second thoughts sent him off in a long, low fit of merriment. "My dear soul, they would be a world's laughing-stock," said he, as soon as he could speak. "George is six foot five—Pennie is about four foot, is she not?"

"Four foot, Andrew, nonsense! She is over five—five foot three, at least; quite tall enough for anything, in my opinion." Again Sir Andrew launched into his provoking chuckle. Lady Goodwin begged he would look at the case reasonably, and not turn it into fun. George has position and little

money, Pennie has money and little position," urged she. "Neither can afford to reproach the other with the absence of beauty; they are both young, both well-disposed and well brought up. And what is more than all, I believe George is *smitten*."

This grave assurance only served to increase Sir Andrew's inopportune mirth. Lady Goodwin stept to and fro the room as Lady Goodwin stept in her rare moods of conjugal irritation. She said nothing, but she looked the more. Sir Andrew, as it behoved a wise man to do under the circumstances, grew suddenly serious, and replied to her last remark: "George's normal condition is to be smitten, to have a smart attack of fever, and a rapid recovery. Let the lad alone. He ought not to marry for a dozen years, and while Pennie is under our care, it would not be the right thing to throw her in the way of a brother of my own, who is without adequate fortune."

Lady Goodwin held her peace, but she was not convinced. If she might not help, she was determined not to hinder the two young people of their amusement, whatever the result. But she hoped, she anticipated a good result. She saw Pennie free

as air with George; teasing, patronizing, and dictatorial by turns, and she thought it a most promising beginning. George, with leisure and a heart on his hands to let, was in some positive danger, but Pennie was as far from thinking sentiment of him as a woman could be. George placed himself at her service, and was so anxious to serve her that she made as much use of him, and the same use, as she would have made of Francis Wynyard had he been there. That was the mischief. Pennie being safe, and feeling safe, allowed herself a little liberty, and George, not being very wise, took it for encouragement. Lady Goodwin strengthened him in his misapprehension when he revealed to her his nascent passion. He was not of the reserved nature that loves to treasure such secrets in silence. He stayed on at Florence in the same hotel as his brother, and his meetings with Pennie were daily and more than daily. They almost lived together, in fact, and this was the position in which Pennie showed to best advantage. She was such a cheerful little soul, morning, noon, and night; so free from captious caprices, tempers, and discon-

tents, that people were never unsure of her. One day George was caught in the act of purloining her photograph, done at Allan Bridge, from Lady Goodwin's gallery of her friends. Pennie good-humouredly said, "Don't take that, it is so very bad."

"Will you give me a better then?" asked George.

"Yes; I will be taken here in my riding-habit, and you must give me one of yours in exchange—one in uniform. I like varieties of costume in my book; the figures will look all so queer as fashions change."

A few days after this bargain had been concluded, Sir Andrew gave notice that if they meant to go to Rome, they must go at once; Parliament was to meet earlier than usual on account of the increasing difficulty of foreign affairs, and they might be obliged to return to England a month sooner than they had planned. Lady Goodwin and Pennie were equally reluctant to lose their promised visit to Rome, and George, though he was even then living in anticipation of a sudden recall and curtailing of his leave, prepared to follow them. When he apprised

his travelling friend, Captain Bangham, of his intention, he was obliged to let in a little light on his motive.

"What, *again*, George? In love with Mr. Wynyard's ward? Why, that is beyond a joke, man!" cried his auditor, with a jolly laugh. "She has a great pot of money—half-a-million, I've been told. And is it quite fair to interfere with poor Tindal's game? Have you never heard the story?" And then he told George all that was common report in Eskdale.

"You don't mean to say she is fond of him?" gasped the young grenadier. "I tell you what, Bangham, I never was so hard hit before." He looked so comically disconsolate that Bangham roared again.

"You will get over it; I think I have seen you worse."

"Never. I am in earnest this time; downright serious. And Bangham, Lady Goodwin thinks I have a chance—she does, indeed. If the guardians won't consent to her having the other, why should not a fellow cut in and win. It is not her money I am after; you know me better than that."

"I did not suppose it was the money, but still, I don't think you are well advised to try it. Lady Brooke was talking about her in Paris, and Lady Brooke is a shrewder woman than Lady Goodwin, though she may not be so excellent. Her view of Mr. Wynyard's ward was, that she would beat them all with her stolid, cheerful obstinacy, and take her own way as soon as she is her own mistress. She looks like it to me—just as if she had said, 'I won't cry or make a fuss, but nobody shall master me.'"

George produced Pennie's photograph from a case that he carried in his pocket, and contemplated it critically. Captain Bangham declared it was "as hard as nails;" the owner protested that it was nothing of the sort—it was a dear little phiz, that brightened and varied in expression more than any other he ever knew. "And she is so kind and pleasant to a fellow," pleaded he; "as nice as a jolly little sister."

"Of course she is; why not? So she would be to anybody who was kind and pleasant to her. It is her nature. She has a turn to be friendly to

friendly people. If I were to come to Rome, and to trudge attendance on her to whatever she wanted to see, she would be quite grateful and thankful, and she would show it. She is not like some girls, who accept everything as mere bounden service. She has a humble opinion of her deserts, notwithstanding the value she must know is attached to money. I heard a great deal of her the last time I was down in Eskdale; and though I dare not decide one way or another on Tindal's guilt, I shall honour the little woman if she sticks to him. I don't mind telling you, George, that I had once some notion of putting up for her myself, but Lady Brooke warned me not to waste my pains. I am dipped awfully, you know—perhaps a lucky bullet or thrust in the spring may clear off all scores."

"Don't talk in that way, Bangham; I can't stand it. I shall follow them to Rome in spite of what you say."

"I know you will. We shall meet again in London—or if not, well then, my boy, at Philippi."

It was during the first week of December that the Goodwins journeyed to Rome, and that George

followed in pursuit of Pennie. Sir Andrew was perplexed; Lady Goodwin was triumphant. Pennie herself was happily unconscious. George had been most convenient at Florence. She missed him during the two days they stopped at Verona, but at Rome he was very convenient again.

"I do not know how I should get about to see all that I have a longing to see if it were not for you," she said to him. "It is very kind of you, but are you sure you like it yourself?" George was incoherently sure that he liked it; she could not ask him to do anything for her that it would not be a pleasure to him to do.

Sir Andrew refrained from interference until he began to see that his brother really meant something beyond passing away his leave pleasantly; and then, when it was just too late to save him mortification, he spoke, almost forbidding him Pennie's presence. George pleaded hard for a little longer liberty of courtship, but when he found Sir Andrew was inexorably bent on discouraging the further prosecution of his suit while Pennie was under his own and his wife's care, the young man

said, then he might as well return to London at once—he was meditating a request for extension of his leave, but, of course, what had passed put an end to it.

"This is not quite the time to ask extension of leave, George; nor, if you will allow me to suggest as much, is it the time for a soldier to be seeking pledges of any girl—much less of a girl whom he has known only a few weeks. Besides, I see no trustworthy tokens of preference in Pennie to justify your hopes. She wears the Rood betrothal ring on her hand still, and while that is the case, she cannot expect to be persecuted with suitors. You are fairly warned off."

George opened his grievances to his sister-in-law, who was deeply sympathetic.

"Never mind, George, you will see her in London. She shall stay with us in Harley Street when we return," said the match-maker, anxious for the success of her plans. "Sir Andrew really knows nothing about these things. I have far more hope of a change in Pennie than I had a month ago—than I had before you came to Florence."

George was only too willing to believe her, and his leave-taking of Pennie from his point of view was not discouraging.

"Going!" cried she. "Going to-morrow morning? Is not that very sudden and unexpected?" She looked quite grieved, and George stammered out some explanation, not very clear and not quite correct. "I thought you had nearly a fortnight's longer leave. I am *so* sorry! We were to have seen the Colosseum some night when the moon is at full."

But for all her expressions of regret, the preoccupied little lady found ample entertainment at a grand church festival on the very day of his departure; and Lady Goodwin was driven to confess that her sentiments were merely friendly towards him as a pleasant companion, or selfish as towards a useful escort whose loss she could not at once supply.

Sir Andrew and his party remained at Rome over Christmas. Every post, every telegram, was then bringing news that boded war. Sir Andrew grew fidgety. Parliament was to open on the last day of January, and he must be in his place. Norminster, which he represented in the House of

Commons, would certainly expect it from him at such an important crisis. Their stay abroad was consequently abridged, and in the first week of the new year they set forward on their journey home. Pennie, in view of her return to Eastwold, could not but acknowledge that the winter had passed delightfully. She and Lady Goodwin, if not perfectly intimate, were yet very cordial friends; and when Lady Goodwin suggested that a few months in London society might profitably conclude Pennie's glimpse of the world, neither she nor any other person who had a voice in the matter, was found to gainsay it. So it was arranged that Mr. Wynyard's ward should have a season in town.

II.

EASTWARD HO!

The Goodwins had a house in Harley Street which they always occupied during the session of Parliament, and there one dark, thorough wet London night they arrived from Dover, and found their little daughter and her nurse had come up from Brackenfield the day before with the Squire and the dame, in whose charge the child had been left while her parents were making their successful restorative trip. Sir Andrew and Sir Andrew's doctor declared it had probably saved his life.

Pennie had a spacious, comfortable room assigned to her looking out on a grimy garden. It was sufficiently quiet, and her heart warmed to the domestic, homely English air of it. For her own sake, and also that she might leave her friends to an unre-

strained family talk, she beat an early retreat to bed, and enjoyed an hour's undisturbed meditation by the pleasant sea-coal fire preparatory to closing her sleepy eyes.

Four months she had been away from England; four months unbroken by a single striking episode that she could recall; four months of level, easy-flowing, innocent amusement, diversified by frequent change of scene, and passed in kind and cultivated society. She smiled as she thought to herself how little had come of her seeing the world which her well-wishers had hoped to see come of it. Nowhere had she met Mr. Tindal's equal. To her mind he was still beyond all comparison the most excellent, the most interesting, the most lovable of human creatures. She had enjoyed her travels very much, but she felt, nevertheless, that after a few weeks in London there would be a pleasure in going back to Eskdale. Though he was not there, it would seem to bring her nearer to him, if she had now and then a glimpse of his house in her rides. She had heard nothing of him for a long while; nothing at all since they parted, beyond that vague scrap of information,

gleaned from her mother, that he was gone to the East.

To the East was now turning all the world's anxiety. Every arsenal echoed with the clang of armaments, and the nation was rousing up, fierce as an old lion, from the long torpor of a forty years' peace. George Goodwin came to luncheon the day after his brother's arrival in Harley Street. He was very happy to see Pennie again, but a blushing embarrassment mingled with his delight, and he appeared to his sister-in-law to have some difficulty in remembering the precise terms on which they had said good-by at Rome. She thought what a mercy it was Sir Andrew had discouraged him from making a declaration! Some rival mistress had evidently seized possession of his fickle soul. He was, in fact, prime full of the war, and visions of glory had almost outblazed his little passion for Pennie. George had never smelt powder yet except on a field-day. He had never been at the killing of anything bigger than moor-game. He lived in dreamland where there was no "day after the battle" —nothing but trumpets sounding, banners waving,

cavalry thundering over the plain, and men shouting "Victory!" with their blood at boiling point.

"Next month," said he in an exultant voice, "we shall be all on the move. Eastward Ho!"

Pennie raised her eyes softly to his eager boyish face, and asked if he should be proud to go. He replied with enthusiasm, taking the wistful, pathetic interest of the inquiry all to himself, and feeling entranced again. Lady Goodwin misinterpreted it too. *If* Pennie *had* conceived an affection for him, after all! He was invited to stay to dinner, but duty prevented that; he promised, however, to come the next day. And early the next day he came. As luck would have it, Sir Andrew and the Squire had gone out, and the dame was inclined for a chat alone with her daughter. It was a beautiful sunny day, and Lady Goodwin asked Pennie if she would not like a ride in the park. Pennie said she should like it above all things—she was quite impatient to try the horse that had been bespoken for her. George had ridden from the Tower, where his regiment was stationed, so that there was no difficulty in setting the pair off together; and when she had done it,

Lady Goodwin felt satisfied that she had done a kind and virtuous deed.

Hyde Park even in its winter dress was beautiful to Pennie. Her horse proved just agreeably spirited, and the air was not too sharp for comfort. George gave her a forecast of what she would see there in the spring, when the gay world came to town, and as she encouraged him to go on, he gave her further some society sketches, which she found amusing. She wished frankly that he were not going away, alleging that it would be dull to visit about where she never saw any one she knew, and opining that people did not make friends in London. George said something rather eloquent about marching where duty and honour called, and hoped that she would vouchsafe him a thought now and then when he was far away. Pennie warmly promised that indeed, *indeed* she would.

What he might have answered remains a mystery; for just at that moment came in view, walking and talking under the trees, Sir Andrew and the Squire. Pennie espied them first, and said she was glad, because she could tell Sir Andrew she approved his

choice of a horse for her riding; but George felt rather guilty towards his brother, recollecting the conversation they had had together at Rome.

Sir Andrew's displeasure fell not on him, however, but on his wife, who was undoubtedly more to blame. He told her he did not understand how she could be so foolish. George, she knew, was unstable as the winds, was always under the influence of the last face that pleased his fickle fancy. It would be a real calamity if Pennie set her heart on him, with whom to be out of sight was as certainly to be out of mind. Lady Goodwin said it would be different, she thought, if they were positively engaged. At that suggestion Sir Andrew grew downright angry. Engaged! he would hear of no such thing as an engagement. If his wife did not give him her word to refrain from encouraging George's nonsense, he would either send Pennie home, or else forbid his brother the house,—which he should be very unwilling to do when the lad was leaving him so soon, whether ever to return God only knew. There was no alternative then but for Lady Goodwin to yield; her husband was a man of his

word, and not accustomed to threaten except in earnest.

George continued to come to Harley Street, but he never again had the opportunity of private speech with Pennie. She did not observe any restraint; and if he felt any, he dissembled it with admirable success. He was soon very busily employed in sterner matters than love-making, and he seemed quite happy and at ease in his mind when he dropped in for a talk over what was at hand. Pennie listened to him with kind, visible interest; and spoke of him occasionally to Lady Goodwin when he was not there. At these times Lady Goodwin thought with regret what a hopeful little attachment Sir Andrew was nipping in the bud! She told the dame, and the dame was sympathetic too. But still she agreed with her son-in-law that on the verge of war, of long absence, and of possible final separation, it was wisest not to form any engagement. Lady Goodwin could not see it in that light. She thought it, indeed, the very hour of all others when true lovers should plight their troth. The dame again demurred,—she did not quite believe that George and Pennie

were lovers in that sense; both were too cheerful, too open, too easy and friendly before all the world, to invite that suspicion. She was sure they would not break their hearts at parting, either of them; though if time and opportunity had favoured them, she did not consider it improbable but that they might have grown into a sensible and permanent affection. Lady Goodwin liked to indulge a more romantic view of her young friends, and this view of the dame's did not satisfy her as being just. She assured her mother that Pennie, though she was plain, was far from commonplace; and that George was full of spirit, enthusiasm, and ardour. The dear old dame laughed: she could not for the life of her make a hero and heroine of a pair so oddly contrasted and so deficient in beauty.

"My dear," said she, "I think you are the only person who wishes them to marry. The notion has not entered Pennie's head, and if it has entered George's, it is only in a vagrant sort of way, and will be better gone again."

"We shall see," replied Lady Goodwin, and with that safe prediction dropped the subject.

The Queen's speech at the opening of Parliament prepared the nation for active hostilities, and though the ministry still talked of preserving peace, February, as George had said, saw the Guards all on the move, and London all astir in sympathy with them. It was in the thick dark of a very winterly morning that George himself marched away—one of a thousand Grenadiers, few of whom returned to be greeted again by the enthusiastic London mob that gathered to see them off. The Squire and Sir Andrew trudged alongside the lad down the Strand and over Waterloo-bridge to the station. They journeyed to Southampton with him, and only shook hands at last when he was embarked with his company on board the *Ripon*. They watched the ships steam down Southampton Water, and then carried home the news that the Guards were fairly under weigh for the East. Lady Goodwin heard the announcement with tears. Pennie's eyes glittered too, but her heart bounded. "I wish, I wish, I wish, *he* were one of them!" was her vehement, silent cry. She was thinking of Mr. Tindal, but both Sir Andrew and his wife fancied she was sending a prayer after George.

The next event that happened in Harley Street was the arrival from the north of Captain and Mrs. Blake. Captain Blake had been appointed to a ship in the fleet that was to sail to the Baltic, and he stayed a few days there with his wife on his road to join at Portsmouth. Everybody did his and her best to be cheerful, but Pennie discerned now, what she had not discerned in George's case, that war meant something else besides honour and glory. Mrs. Blake had two little children, and expected a third in the summer. She was dispirited and anxious, delicate moreover, and a cause of anxiety to all who loved her. The dame would fain have had her go back to Brackenfield to be taken care of in her husband's absence, but she would hear of nothing but going into lodgings at Southsea, and there awaiting his return. She was suffered to have her own way, and the Squire and the dame accompanied her, to stay with her over the parting.

On the 28th of March came the formal Declaration of War with Russia in the *London Gazette*; then on the 26th of April a National Fast-Day, and after that many another day of national humiliation and sorrow.

Pennie became a zealous reader of *The Times*. She had her own copy; for Sir Andrew's reading of it interfered with hers, and she had not patience to wait until it came to her hands after he had done with it. Lady Goodwin speculated often whether it was interest in George held her so long every morning over the broadsheet, but she did not ask; only whenever news of him came in a letter, she took the first quiet opportunity of telling her. And Pennie always received the intelligence with rapt attention. In fact, she lent patient ears to anybody who would talk about the war; hoping against hope that some day, by chance, she should hear tidings of Mr. Tindal. There was a systematic avoidance of his name in all the letters she received at this period from her mother and Mrs. Wynyard. No question she asked was answered; no wish she expressed was responded to. But this very carefulness defeated its own end by filling her with vague alarms, and making her anxiety to learn something of his whereabouts more restless and distressing.

April and May passed with alternate dull days and days when she was forced to exert herself in

society. The rumours of neglect, mismanagement, and misery that began to agitate the public soon after the landing of the expeditionary army at Gallipoli took their effect upon her mind. Lady Goodwin, observing her one morning much out of spirits, used a sly little moral probe, and said: "No doubt, George, poor fellow! was as well off as anybody." Pennie gave her no answer. She was not thinking of George, but she could hardly say so without telling of whom she was thinking, and Lady Goodwin had never encouraged her to speak of Mr. Tindal. She therefore nursed her fears in silence. There was no loud talk of glory yet to inspire her with lofty visions. Mr. Tindal had probably been enduring for months the mean privations there was so much fuss about—getting wet, sleeping without shelter, and not having enough to eat, or nice things; that was all, of course, and might do him no harm. But perhaps he had run greater dangers; perhaps he had rushed into the thick of the campaign on the Danube! Perhaps he had even fallen, an unknown volunteer in the army of Omar Pasha! Nothing was too extreme for her imagining when once her fancy had taken wings. Perhaps he

was *dead*, and they were afraid to tell her! The day that gloomy possibility effected a lodgment in her brain, she aggrieved Lady Goodwin by declining to go to a garden fête at Richmond.

The next morning she bethought her of writing to Dr. Grey—he would not deceive her, she was sure. After nearly a week's delay, the answer came in an unfamiliar hand, and proved to be from Mr. Buckhurst. Of Mr. Tindal he said he could hear nothing but that he was still in the East—alive and well for anything they knew to the contrary at the Abbey. Of her guardian, however, he gave her the sad, unexpected news, that the good old doctor had only a few days before suffered a paralytic seizure, and that it was much to be feared he would never resume the exercise of his profession. Pennie formed a prompt resolve to return to Eastwold, and without loss of time announced it to Lady Goodwin.

"But, my dear Pennie, you were to be presented at the drawing-room," remonstrated her amazed *chaperone*. "You have not seen the pictures at the Royal Academy. The season is hardly begun, and you have been nowhere. Can it be possible

that you do not care for the pleasures you might enjoy?"

"I could care for them heartily enough if I had a mind at ease," replied Pennie. "As it is, I think I shall be happier at Eastwold."

Lady Goodwin knew then that all her dreams and schemes for George and Pennie had been labour in vain. She wrote to that effect to her sister. "You will find your headstrong ward still clinging with all her heart to Mr. Tindal." Mrs. Wynyard sighed over the abortive result of Pennie's glimpse of the world, and wrote her a few lines by return of post to bid her welcome to Eastwold whenever she was pleased to come.

The next day Mr. Wynyard's ward set out on her return to Eskdale.

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